HEMPFIELD

A Novel

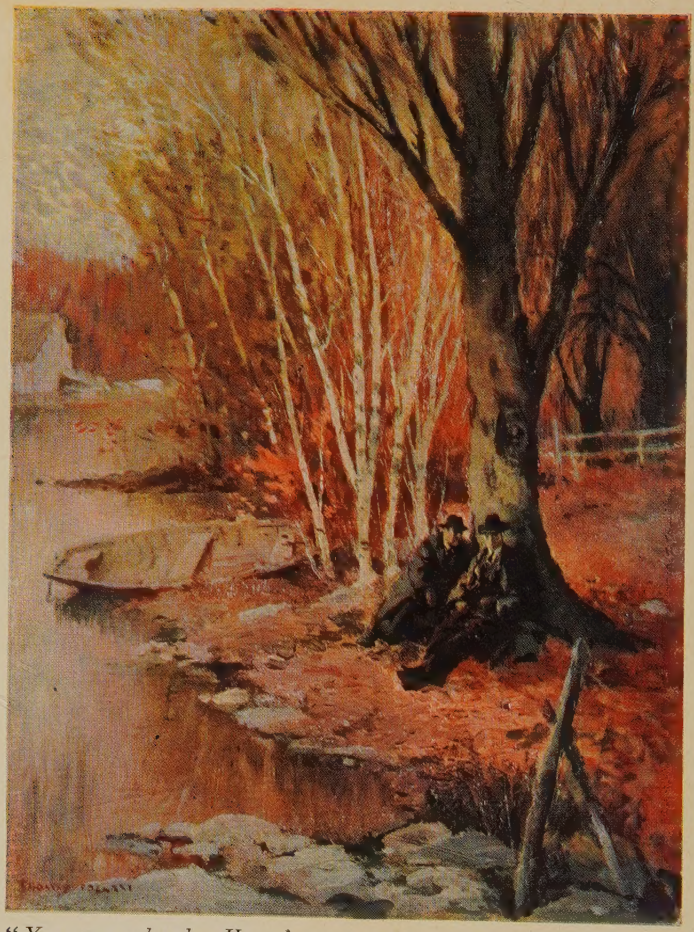
DAVID GRAYSON

THOMAS FOGARTY

Elizabeth M. Hunter

October 30, 1920.

HEMPFIELD



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By

DAVID GRAYSON

Author of

"Adventures in C[illegible]

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Illustrations by Thomas [illegible]

GARDEN CITY N[illegible]

DOUBLEDAY, [illegible] & CO[illegible]

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"Adventures in Contentment," "Adventures in Friendship," "The Friendly Road"

Illustrated by Thomas Fogarty

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1915

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HEMPFIELD

CHAPTER I

I DISCOVER THE PRINTING-OFFICE

FOR years my sister Harriet and I confined our relationships with the neighbouring town of Hempfield to the Biblical "yea, yea" and "nay, nay," not knowing how much we missed, and used its friendly people as one might use an inanimate plough or an insensate rolling-pin, as mere implements or adjuncts in the provision of food or clothing for our needs.

It came only gradually alive for us. As the years passed the utilitarian stranger with whom we traded became an acquaintance, and the acquaintance a friend. Here and there a man or a woman stepped out of the background, as it were, of a dim picture, and became a living being. One of the first was the old

gunsmith of whom I have already written. Another was Doctor North—though he really lived outside the town—whom we came to know late in his career. He was one of the great unknown men of this country; he lives yet in many lives, a sort of immortality which comes only to those who have learned the greatest art of all arts, the art of life. The Scotch preacher, whom we have loved as we love few human beings, was also in reality a part of the town, though we always felt that he belonged to our own particular neighbourhood. He was ever a friend to all men, town or country.

It has always been something of a mystery to me, when I think of it, how I happened for so long to miss knowing more about old Captain Doane, and MacGregor, that roseate Scotchman. It is easier to understand why I never knew Anthy, for she was much away from Hempfield in the years just after I came here; and as for Norton Carr and Ed Smith, they did not come until some time afterward.

I shall later celebrate Nort's arrival in Hempfield—and may petition the selectmen to set up a monument upon the spot of this precious soil where he first set a shaky foot.

I lived before I knew Anthy and Nort and MacGregor and the old Captain, but sometimes I wonder how I lived. When we let new friends into our lives we become permanently enlarged, and marvel that we could ever have lived in a smaller world.

So I came to know Hempfield, and all those stories—humorous, tragic, exciting, bitter, sorrowful—which thrive so lustily in every small town. As we treasure finally those books which are not, after all, concerned with clapping finite conclusions to infinite events, but are content to be beautiful as they go (as truth is beautiful), so I love the living stories of Hempfield, nor care deeply whether they are at Chapter I, or in the midst of the climax, or whether they are tapering toward a Gothic-lettered "Finis." Only I have never once come across any Hempfield story that can be said to have reached a final page. Every Hempfield story I know has been like a stone dropped in the puddle of life, with ripples that grow ever wider with the years. And I esteem it the best thing in my life that I have had a part in some of those stories: that a few people, perhaps, are different, as I am different, because I passed that way.

How well I remember the evening when my eye was first caught by the twinkle of that luminary, the Hempfield *Star*, with which afterward I was to become so intimately acquainted. It came to me like a fresh breeze on a sultry day, or a new man in the town road. It was a paragraph in the editorial page, headed with a single word printed in robust black type:

FUDGE

At that time I had been "taking in" the *Star* (as they say here) for only a few weeks, and had seen little in it that made it appear different from any other weekly newspaper. I am ashamed to say that I had entertained a good-humoured tolerance, mingled with contempt, for country newspapers. They seemed to me the apotheosis of the little, the palladium of the uninteresting. It did not occur to me that anything possessed of such tenacity of life as the country newspaper must have a real meaning and perform a genuine function in our civilization. In this roaring age of efficiency we do not long support any institution that does not set its claws deep into our common life—and hang on.

I began to take the *Star* as a sort of concession, arguing with myself that it would at least give me the weekly price of eggs and potatoes; and, besides, Harriet always wants to know regularly where the Ladies' Literary Society is to hold its meetings.

You cannot imagine my surprise and interest then, when I came abruptly upon that explosive, black-typed "Fudge" in the middle of the *Star*. I have always had a fondness for the word. It is like a breath of fresh air in a stuffy library, and any man who can say "Fudge" in a big, round voice has something in him. He's got views and a personality, even though the views may be crooked and the personality prickly.

With what joy I read that paragraph—and cut it from the paper, and have it yet in my golden treasury. This is it:

FUDGE

A fellow named Wright, who lives out in Ohio, says he can fly. Mr. Wright is wrong. If the Lord had intended human beings to fly He would have grown wings on us. He made birds for the air, and fish for the sea, and men to walk on two legs. It is a common characteristic of flying-machine inventors and Democrats that they

are not satisfied with the doings of the Lord, but must be turning the world topsy-turvy. Mr. Wright of Ohio should peruse the historic story of Darius Green and his flying machine. If memory serves us right Darius bumped his head, and afterward lived a sensible life. The *Star* would commend the example of Mr. Green to Mr. Wright—and the Democrats.

Harriet heard me laughing, and called from the other room:

"David, what *are* you laughing at?"

"Why, a new judge in Israel"—and I read the paragraph aloud with the keenest delight.

"But I thought Mr. Wright *could* fly!" said my sister doubtfully.

"Well, he can," said I, "only this writer is a Republican."

She was silent for a moment, standing there in the doorway while I watched with interest the gathering question.

"But I don't see why a Republican—if he *can* fly——"

"Harriet," I began rather oratorically, "this is a very interesting and amusing world we live in, and it is fortunate that we do not all believe everything we see or hear—at any rate, I'd like to meet the man who wrote that

paragraph. I feel certain that he is one of the everlasting rocks of New England."

It was this amusing little incident, rather than the really serious purpose that lay back of it, that sent me at last to Hempfield. I kept thinking about the man of the paragraph as I went about my work, chuckling in the cow stable or pausing when I was putting down the hay. I imagined him an old fellow with gray chin whiskers, a pair of spectacles set low on his nose, and a frown between his eyes.

"How he does despise Democrats!" I said to myself.

And yet—our instinct for the compensatory view being irresistible—a pretty good old chap! I thought I should like him, somehow.

One early morning in May, the spring having opened with rare splendour, I hitched up the mare and drove to town. Ostensibly I was going for a few ears of seed corn, a new tooth for my cultivator, and a ham for Harriet—so is the spirit bound down to the mundane—but in reality I was looking for the man who could say "Fudge" with such bluff assurance.

It was a wonderful spring morning, and I did not in the least know as I drove the old mare in

the town road, with all the familiar hills and trees about me, that I was going into a new country, fairer by far than ours, where the clouds are higher than they are here, and the grass is greener, where all the men grow taller and the women more beautiful.

I asked Nort once, long afterward, if he could remember the first impression he had when he came to Hempfield and saw the printing-office. Nort frowned, as though thinking hard, and made a characteristic reply:

"I don't rightly remember," said he, "of having any first impression, until I saw Anthy."

But I will not be hurried even to my meeting with Anthy; for I have a very vivid first impression of the printing-office as it sat like a contemplative old gentleman in its ancient and shabby garden.

First we see things with our eyes, see them flat like pictures in a book, and that isn't really sight at all. Then some day we see them with the heart, or the soul, or the spirit—I'm not certain just what it is that really sees, but it is something warm and strong and light inside of us—and that is the true sight.

I had driven the streets of Hempfield for years, and gone in at the grocery stores, made a

familiar resort of the gunsmith shop, and visited the post office, but had never really seen the printing-office at all.

Like most things or people really worth

It sat there in its garden and watched with mild interest the hasty world go by

knowing, the printing-office is of a retiring disposition. It is an old building, once a dwelling-house, which stands somewhat back

from the street, with a quaint old garden around it. An ancient picket fence, nicked and whittled by a generation or so of boys who should have known better, guards its privacy. At the tip of the low cornice is a weatherbeaten bird house, a miniature Greek Parthenon, where the wrens built their nests. Larger and more progressive business buildings had crowded up to the street lines on both sides of it, and yet it managed to preserve somehow an air of ancient gentility. The gate sagged on its hinges, the chimney had lost a brick or two, but it sat there in its garden and watched with mild interest the hasty world go by.

I wondered, that morning, why the peculiar air of the place had never before touched me. I paused a moment, looking in at it with such a feeling of expectancy as I cannot well describe. I did not know what adventure might there befall me. At any moment I half expected to see my imagined old fellow appear on the doorstep and cry out, half ironically, half explosively: "Fudge!" Upon which, undoubtedly, I should have disappeared into thin air.

There being no sign of life, for it was still very early in the morning, I opened the gate

and went in. Over the front door stretched a weatherbeaten sign bearing these words in large letters:

THE HEMPFIELD STAR

Under this name there was a line of smaller lettering, so faded that one could not easily read it from the street. But as I stood now at the doorway and looked up I could make it out—and it came to me, I cannot tell with what charm, like the far-off echo of ancient laughter:

Hitch Your Wagon to the Star

Below this legend in fresher paint, bearing indeed the evidence of repainting, for many are the vicissitudes of a country newspaper, was the name of the firm:

Doane & Doane

I went up the steps to the little porch and looked in at the doorway. I shall never forget the odour of printer's ink which came warmly to my nostrils, the never-to-be-forgotten odour of printer's ink, sweeter than the spices of Araby, more alluring than attar of roses! . . .

It was a long, low room, with pasted pictures on the walls, a row of dingy cases at one side, the press at the farther end, the stones near it, and a cutting machine with its arm raised aloft as though to command attention. The editor's desk in the corner was heaped so high with books and papers and magazines and pamphlets that another single one added to the pile would certainly have produced an avalanche—and ended ignominiously in the capacious wastebasket.

For all its dinginess and its picturesque disorder there was something infinitely beguiling about the room. In the front window stood a row of potted geraniums, very thrifty, and there was a yellow canary in a cage, and the editor's ancient chair (one lame leg bandaged with string) was occupied by an old fat gray cat, curled up on a cushion and comfortably asleep. A light breeze came in at one of the windows, fingered a leaf of the calendar to make sure that it was really spring again, and went out blithely at the other window.

I liked it: I liked it all.

"There is a fine woman around this shop somewhere," I said to myself, "or else a very fine man."

My vision of the daring paragrapher who could say "Fudge" with such virgin enthusiasm instantly shifted. I saw him now as something of a poet—still old, but with a pleasing beard (none of your common chin whiskers) and rarely fine eyes, a man who could care for flowers in the window and keep the cat from the canary.

At that instant my eyes were smitten with stark reality, my imagination wrecked upon the reef of fact. I saw Fergus MacGregor.

Fergus is one of those men who should always be seen for the first time: after you begin to know him, you can't rightly appreciate him.

He was sitting away back in the corner of the room, by his favourite window, tipped back in his chair, with one heel hooked over a rung, the other leg playing loose in space, sadly reading the "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" which he considers the greatest book in the world—next to Robert Burns's poems.

Fergus has always been good for me. He is all facts, like roast beef, or asparagus, or a wheel in a rut. It is almost impossible to idealize Fergus: he has freckles and red hair on his hands. When Fergus first came to Hemp-

field, one of our good old Yankee citizens, who had never seen much of foreigners and therefore considered them all immoral, said he never had liked Frenchmen.

Whenever I am soaring aloft, as I think I am too likely to do, I have to be very firm in the wings, else the sight of Fergus MacGregor, with his red hair, his scorched face, and his angular wiry frame, will bring me straight down to earth. He brought me down the first morning I laid eyes on him. As I stood there in the printing-office, looking about me, Fergus glanced up from the "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and said:

"Wull?"

I can't tell you what worlds of solid reality were packed into that single word. At once all my imaginings came tumbling about me. What, after all, had I come for? Why was I in this absurd printing-office? What wild-goose chase was I on? I should really be at home planting potatoes. Potatoes, cows, corn, cash—surely there were no other realities in life! For an instant the visions of the fields died within me, and I felt sick and weak. You will understand—if you understand.

I thought, as I stood there stupidly, that

this was indeed the man who would say "Fudge!" to all the world.

I groped in a wandering mind for some adequate way of escape, and it occurred to me presently that I could order a thousand envelopes, with my name printed in the corner, and bring him to terms. No, I'd order *five* thousand—and utterly obliterate him!

"Wull?" said Fergus.

If it had not been for this second "Wull?" I might have gone back to my immemorial existence and never have brought my new vision to the hard test of life, never have known Anthy, never have felt the glory of a new earth.

But with that second "Wull?" which was even more devastating than the first, I felt something electric, warm, strong, stinging through me. I had a curious sense of high happiness, and before I knew it I was saying:

"After all, men *do* fly!"

I laugh still when I remember how Fergus MacGregor looked at me. For a long moment he said nothing as eloquently as ever I heard it said. I began to feel the humour of the situation (humour is the fellow that always

waits just around the corner until the danger is past), but I said in all seriousness:

"I'm looking for the man who wrote an editorial last week headed 'Fudge.' He doesn't appear to approve of flying machines."

Fergus had not stirred by so much as the fraction of an inch. He looked at me for another instant and then paid me, if I had known it, a most surprising compliment. He smiled. His face slowly cracked open—I can express it no other way—and remained cracked for the space of two seconds, and returned to its usual condition. Fergus's smile is one of the wonders of nature.

"What ye going to do?" asked Fergus. "Thrash the editor?"

"No," said I, "convert him."

Fergus slowly shook his head.

"Ye can't," said he.

"I've already begun," said I.

Fergus looked me over for a moment, and smiled again, this time winding up with a snort or a cough, which started to be a laugh, but stopped away down somewhere inside of him.

"Ye think I wrote it?"

"Well," said I, "you look perfectly capable of it."

I was just beginning to enjoy thoroughly this give and take of conversation, which of all sports in the world is certainly the most fascinating, when I heard steps behind me and, turning half around, saw Anthy for the first time.

"There's the editor," said Fergus. "Ask her yourself."

She came down the room toward me with a quick, businesslike step. She wore a little round straw hat with a plain band. She had a sprig of lilac on her coat, and looked at me directly—like a man. She had very clear blue eyes.

I have thought of this meeting a thousand times since—in the light of all that followed—and this is literally all I saw. I was not especially impressed in any way, except perhaps with a feeling of wonder that this was the person in authority, really the editor.

I have tried to recall every instant of that meeting, and cannot remember that I thought of her either as young or as a woman. Perhaps the excitement and amusement of my talk with Fergus served to prevent a more vivid first impression. I speak of this reaction because all my life, whenever I have met a woman—I

have been much alone—I have had a curious sense of being with some one a little higher or better than I am, to whom I should bow, or to whom I should present something, or with whom I should joke. With whom I should not, after all, be quite natural! I wonder if this is at all an ordinary experience with men? I wonder if any one will understand me when I say that there has always seemed to me something not quite proper in talking to a woman directly, seriously, without reservation, as to a man? But I record it here as a curious fact that I met Anthy that morning just as I would have met a man—as one human being facing another.

"I am the editor," she said crisply, but with good humour.

"Well," I said, "I'm afraid I'm on a rather unusual and unbusinesslike errand."

She did not help me.

"Last week I read an editorial in your paper which amused—interested—me very much. It was headed 'Fudge.' The writer plainly doesn't believe either in flying machines or in Democrats."

I heard Fergus bark behind me.

"He's going to thrash the writer," said Fergus.

Anthy glanced swiftly across at Fergus. It occurred to me in a flash:

"Why, *she* wrote it!"

The sudden thought of the chin whiskers I had fastened upon the imaginary writer was too much for me, and I laughed outright.

"Well," said I, "I shall not attempt any extreme measures until I try, at least, to convert her."

I saw now that I had said something really amusing, for Fergus barked twice behind me and Anthy broke into the liveliest laughter.

"You don't really think I wrote it?" she inquired in the roundest astonishment, with one hand on her breast.

"I should certainly be very well repaid for my visit," said I, "if I thought you did."

"Won't that amuse the Captain!" she exclaimed.

"So the Captain wrote it," I said, not knowing in the least who the Captain was. "Tell me, has he chin whiskers?"

"Why?" asked Anthy.

"Well, when I read that editorial," I said, beginning again to enjoy the give and take of the conversation, "I imagined the sort of man who must have written it: chin whiskers,

spectacles low on his nose, very severe on all young things."

Anthy looked at Fergus.

"And does he by any chance"—I inquired in as serious a manner as I could command, "I mean, of course, when he is angry—kick the cat?"

At this Fergus came down with a bang on all four legs of his chair, and we all laughed together.

"Say," said Fergus, "I don't know who ye are, but ye're all right!"

And that was the way I came first to the printing-office.

CHAPTER II

I STEP BOLDLY INTO THE STORY

IT IS one of the provoking, but interesting, things about life that it will never stop a moment for admiration. No sooner do you pause to enjoy it, or philosophize over it, or poetize about it, than it is up and away, and the next time you glance around it is vanishing over the hill—with the wind in its garments and the sun in its hair. If you do not go on with life, it will go on without you. The only safe way, then, to follow a story, I mean a story in real life, is to get right into it yourself. How breathless, then, it becomes, how you long for—and yet fear—the next chapter, how you love the heroine and hate the villain, and

never for an instant can you tell how it is all coming out!

I should be tempted to say that I arrived at the printing-office at a psychological moment if it were not for the fact, as I soon learned, that most of the moments for several months past had been equally psychological. Indeed, before I had fairly got acquainted with the printing-office, and with Fergus and Anthy, and was expecting momentarily to hear the Captain coming in, crying "Fudge," the story moved on, as majestically as if I hadn't appeared at all.

In a story or a play you can set your stage for your crises, and lead up to the entrance of your villain with appropriate literary flourishes. You can artfully let us know beforehand that it is really a villain who is about to intrude upon your paradise, and dim the voice of the canary and frighten the cat. But in real life, events and crises have a disconcerting way of backing into your narrative before ever you are ready for them, and at the most awkward and inconvenient times.

It was thus that Bucky Penrose came into the printing-office that spring morning. He was struggling with a small but weighty box

filled with literature in metal. When he had got it well inside, he deposited it, not at all gently, on a stool, took off his cap, and wiped his forehead.

"Whew, it's hot this morning!" said Bucky.

Now, I dislike to speak of Bucky as a villain, for of all the people in Hempfield Bucky certainly least looks the part. He has towy hair and mild, light-blue eyes. He wears a visor cap and carries a long, flat book which he flaps open for you to sign. He is the expressman.

I could see, however, from the look in Anthy's face that Bucky was really a hardened villain. And Bucky himself seemed to know it and feel it, for it was in an apologetic voice that he said:

"The plates is a dollar this week, Miss Doane, and the insides is seven and a half, C. O. D."

Anthy's hand went to the little leather bag she carried.

"I—I didn't bring up the insides in this load. Mr. Peters said—the Captain——"

Anthy had taken a step forward, and there was a look of sudden determination in her face.

"Never mind, Bucky, about the Captain——"

"Well, I thought——"

He was thinking just what the whole of Hempfield was thinking, and dared not say. The colour came up in Anthy's cheeks, but she only lifted her chin the higher.

"Tell Mr. Peters to send up the insides at once, Bucky, *at once*. The money will be ready for him."

"All right, Miss Doane, all right—but I thought——"

"Don't think," growled MacGregor, who had been standing aside and saying nothing; "it ain't your calling."

Bucky turned fiercely to reply, but Anthy suddenly laid a hand on his arm.

"In the future, Bucky, don't go to the Captain at all. Come straight to me."

"'Tain't my fault," grumbled Bucky; "I got to collect."

"Certainly you have," said Anthy; "I'll pay you for the box, and you can bring the insides later. Tell Mr. Peters."

It was magnificent the way she carried it off; and when at last the villain had departed, she turned to us with a face slightly flushed, but in perfect control. I had a sudden curious lift of the heart: for there is nothing that so

stirs the soul of a man as the sight of courage in a woman. If I had been interested before, I was doubly interested now. It had been one of those lightning-flash incidents which let us more deeply into the real life of men than pages of history. I felt that this printing-office was sacred ground, the scene of battle and trial and commotion.

At the same time the whole situation struck me with a sudden sense of amusement and surprise. Back somewhere in my consciousness I had always felt something of awe for the Power of the Press. A kind of institutional sanctity seemed to hedge it round about, so that it spoke with the thunder of authority—and here was the Press quite unable to pay the expressman seven dollars and a half! I think I must have entertained much the same view that Captain Doane so delights to express upon any favourable (or unfavourable) public occasion.

How often have I heard him since that memorable time! He does it very impressively, with his right thumb hooked into the buttons of his vest, his beautiful shaggy head thrown well back, and his somewhat shabby frock coat drawn up on the left side—for it is

his left hand that he holds so tremulously and impressively aloft—that mighty director of public opinion, that repository of freedom, that palladium of democracy, that ruler of the nation. Whenever I hear the Captain, I can never think of the press without trembling a little at its incredible prescience, without being awed by the way in which it soaks up the life of the community and, having held it for a moment in solution, distributes it—I quote the Captain—"like dew" (sometimes manna) "upon the populace, iridescent with the glories of the printed word." Nor do I ever hear him these days, especially in his moments of biting irony, when he considers those "contemners of the Press" (mostly Democrats) who never tire of "nefarious practices," without thinking of that first morning I spent in the printing-office—and the look in Anthy's eyes.

Events after the departure of the mild-eyed Bucky moved swiftly. Anthy walked down the room, and Fergus, after hesitating for a moment, followed her. I suppose I should have departed promptly, but I couldn't—I simply couldn't. After the solitude of my farm and my thoughts, I cannot tell how fascinating I found these stirring events.

The little drama which followed was all perfectly clear to me, though I heard not a word, except the last exclamation. As Fergus followed Anthy, he drew a lean tobacco bag slowly out of his hip pocket—and thrust it quickly back again, hesitated, then spoke to Anthy. She shook her head vigorously, and stood up very straight and still. Fergus's hand went back to his pocket again, hesitated, plunged in. He took a bill from the lean bag and fumbled it in his hand. Every line in Anthy's firm body said no. She looked out of the window expectantly. Fergus's looks followed hers. It was evident that they both expected and desired something very much.

"There he is now!" exclaimed Anthy, and that was the exclamation I heard.

He didn't come in crying "Fudge!" as I half expected, but it was none the less a dramatic moment for me. I heard the preliminary thump, thump, of his cane on the porch. I heard him clear his throat stentoriously, as was his custom, and then the Captain, stepping in, looked about him with a benignant eye.

"Anthy, Anthy," he called. "Where are you, Anthy?"

"Here, Uncle! Glad to see you. The insides are at the station, and we need——"

"Anthy," interrupted the Captain, impressively waving his hand, "I have determined upon one thing."

He took off his broad-brimmed hat, and, having with some determination forced the cat from the editorial chair, sat down. There was evidently something unusual on his mind. He sat up straight, resting one hand, which was seen to hold a paper-covered parcel, upon the edge of the desk. If he saw me at all, he gave no sign. I have never thought he saw me.

"Anthy——"

He paused a moment, very dignified. Anthy said nothing.

"I have determined," he continued, "that we must economize."

A swift flash swept over Anthy's expressive face, whether of sympathy or amusement I could not tell. I never knew a time in Anthy's life, even when the heavy world rested most heavily upon her (except once), when she wasn't as near to laughter as she was to tears. She had the God-given grace of seeing that every serious thing in life has a humorous side.

"You're right, Uncle—especially this very morning——"

"Yes, Anthy," he again interrupted, as though he couldn't afford to be diverted by immediate considerations. "Yes, we must economize sharply. Times are not what they were when your father was alive. 'Wealth accumulates and men decay.' The country press is being strangled, forced to the wall by the brute wealth of the city. The march of events——"

"Yes, Uncle."

He stopped in the midst of his flight and repeated:

"We must economize—*and I've begun!*"

He said it with great dramatic force, but the effect on Anthy was not what an unprejudiced observer might have expected. I thought she looked a bit alarmed.

The Captain cleared his throat, and said with impressive deliberation:

"I've given up smoking cigars!"

Anthy's laugh was clear and strong.

"You have!" she exclaimed.

"And from now on," said the Captain, still very serious, "I shall smoke a pipe."

With that he took notice for the first time of

the package in his hand. It contained a case, which he opened slowly.

"Isn't it a beauty?" he said, holding up a new briar pipe.

"Yes," she replied faintly; "but, Uncle, how did you get it?"

He cleared his throat.

"One must make a beginning," he said; "economy is positively necessary. I bought it."

"Uncle, you *didn't* spend Frank Toby's subscription for a pipe!"

The Captain looked a little offended.

"Anthy, it was a bargain. It was marked down from two dollars."

Anthy turned partly aside, quite unconscious of either Fergus or me, and such a look of discouragement and distress swept over her face as I cannot describe. But it was only for an instant. The Captain was still holding up the pipe for her admiration. She laid her hand again quickly on his shoulder.

"It *is* a beauty," she said.

"I knew you'd like it," exclaimed the Captain benevolently. "When I saw it in the window I said, 'Anthy'd like that pipe.' I knew it. So I bought it."

"But, Uncle—how we *did* need the money this morning of all mornings! The insides are here, we must have them——"

"So I say," said the Captain with great firmness, "we must economize sharply. And I've begun. Let's all get down now to work. Fergus, I've answered the fellow on the Sterling *Democrat*. I've left nothing of him at all—not a pinfeather."

With that he took a new pouch of tobacco from his pocket, and began to fill his new pipe. The cat rubbed familiarly against his leg.

Silence in the office, interrupted a moment later by the second appearance of that villain, Bucky Penrose, who thrust his head in the door and called out:

"Lend a hand, Fergus. I got the insides."

Fergus looked at Anthy. She had grown pale.

"Go on, Fergus."

It is this way with me, that often I think of the great thing to do after I get home and into bed. But it came to me suddenly—an inspiration that made me a little dizzy for a moment—and I stepped into the story.

"I forgot a part of my errand," I said,

"when we were—interrupted. I want to subscribe to your paper, right away."

Anthy looked at me keenly for a moment, her colour slowly rising.

"Whom shall we send it to?" she asked in the dryest, most businesslike voice, as though subscriptions were flowing in all the time.

For the life of me I couldn't think of anybody. I never was more at sea in my life. I don't know yet how it occurred to me, but I said, suddenly, with great relief:

"Why, send it to Doctor McAlway."

"He is already a subscriber, one of our oldest," she responded crisply.

We stood there, looking at each other desperately.

"Well," said I, "send it—send it to my uncle—in California."

At that Anthy laughed; we both laughed. But she was evidently very determined.

"I appreciate—I know," she began, "but I can't——"

"See here," I said severely. "You're in the newspaper business, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Then I propose to subscribe for your paper. I demand my rights. And besides"—it came

to me with sudden inspiration—"I must have, immediately, a thousand envelopes with my name printed in the corner."

With that I drew my pocketbook quickly from my pocket and handed her a bill. She took it doubtfully—but at that moment there was a tremendous bump on the porch, and the voice of Fergus shouting directions. When the two men came in with their burden I was studying a fire insurance advertisement on the wall, and Anthy was stepping confidently toward the door.

I wish I could picture the look on Fergus's face when Bucky presented his book and Anthy gave him a bill requiring change. Fergus stood rubbing one finger behind his ear—a sign that there were things in the universe that puzzled him.

While these thrilling events and hairbreadth escapes had been taking place, while the doomed *Star* was being saved to twinkle for another week, the all-unconscious Captain had been sitting at his desk rumbling and grumbling as he opened the exchanges. This was an occupation he affected greatly to despise, but which he would not have given over for the world. By the time he had read

about a dozen of his esteemed contemporaries he was usually in a condition in which he could, as he himself put it, "wield a pungent pen." He had arrived at that nefarious sheet, the Sterling *Democrat*, and was leaning back in his chair reading the utterly preposterous lucubrations of Brother Kendrick, which he always saved to the last to give a final fillip to his spirits. Suddenly he dashed the paper aside, sat up straight, and cried out with tremendous vigour:

"Fudge!"

It was glorious; it came quite up to my highest expectations. But somehow, at that moment, it was enough for me to see and hear the Captain, without getting any better acquainted. I wasn't sure, indeed, that I cared to know him at all. I didn't like his new pipe—which shows how little I then understood the Captain!

As I was going out, for even the most interesting incidents must have an end, I stepped over and said to Anthy in a low voice:

"I'll see that you get the address of—my uncle in California."

CHAPTER III

ANTHY

IT IS one of the strange things in our lives—interesting, too—what tricks our early memories play us. What castles in fairyland they build for us, what never-never ships they send to sea! To a single flaming incident imprinted upon our consciousness by the swift shutter of the soul of youth they add a little of that-which-we-have-heard-told, spice it with a bit of that-which-would-be-beautiful-if-it-could-have-happened, and throw in a rosy

dream or two—and the compound, well warmed in the fecund soil of the childish imagination, becomes far more real and attractive to us than the drab incidents of our grown-up yesterdays.

Long afterward, when we had become much better acquainted, Anthy told me one day, very quietly, of the greatest memory of her childhood. It was of something that never could have happened at all; and yet, to Anthy, it was one of the treasured realities of her life, a memory to live by.

She was standing at the bedside of her mother. She remembered, she said, exactly how her mother looked—her delicate, girlish face, the big clear eyes, the wavy hair all loose on the pillow. They had just placed the child in her arms, and she was drawing the small bundle close up to her, and looking down at it, and crying. It was the crying that Anthy remembered the best of all.

And the child that Anthy saw so clearly was Anthy herself—and this was the only memory she ever had of her mother. That poor lady, perhaps a little tired of a world too big and harsh for her, and disappointed that her child was not a son whom she could name Anthony,

after its father, tarried only a week after Anthy was born.

"You see," said Anthy, "I was intended to be a boy."

After that, Anthy remembered a little girl, a very lonely little girl, sitting at a certain place on the third step from the bottom of the stairs. There were curious urns filled with flowers on the wall paper, and her two friends, Richard and Rachel, came out of the wall near the dining-room door and looked through the stair spindles at her. Rachel had lovely curly hair and Richard wore shiny brass buttons on his jacket, and made faces. She used to whisper to them between the spindles, and whenever any one came they went back quickly through the wall. She liked Rachel better than Richard.

There was a time later when her hero was Ivanhoe—just the name, not the man in the book. She read a great deal there in the lonely house, and her taste in those years ran to the gloomy and mysterious. The early chapters of an old book called "Wuthering Heights" thrilled her with fascinated interest, and she delighted in "Peter Ibbetson." Sometimes she would take down the volume of Tennyson

in her father's library and, if the light was low, read aloud:

I *hate* the *dreadful* hollow behind the little wood.

A very lonely little girl, sitting at a certain place on the third step from the bottom of the stairs

As she read, she would thrill with delicious horror.

Then she went away to school, not knowing in the least how much her father missed her; and when she came back, the home of her girlhood seemed dreadfully shabby, small, old-fashioned, and she did not like the iron deer on the lawn nor the cabinet of specimens in the corner of the parlour.

Anthy did not tell me all these things at one time, and some she never told me at all. They were the slow gatherings of many rich friendships in Hempfield, and a few things afterward came to me, inadvertently, from Nort. I shall venture often in this narrative to assume the omniscience of foreknowledge: for it is one of the beautiful things to me, as I write, that I can look at those early hard days in the printing-office through the golden haze of later events.

It was in the vacations from college that Anthy began really to know her father, who was, in his way, a rather remarkable man. Although I never knew him well personally, I remember seeing him often in the town roads during the latter years of his life. He was always in a hurry, always looked a little tired,

The home of her girlhood seemed dreadfully shabby, small, and old-fashioned

always wore his winter hat too late in the spring, and his straw hat too late in the fall.

Anthy remembered her father as forever writing on bits of yellow paper: "John Gorman lost a valuable pig last Wednesday"; or "Mrs. Bertha Hopkins is visiting her daughter in Arnoville."

Anthy was secretly ashamed of this unending writing of local events, just as she was ashamed of the round bald spot on her father's head, and of the goloshes which he wore in winter. And yet, in some curious deep way—for love struggles in youth to harmonize the real with the ideal—these things of which she was ashamed gave her a sort of fierce pride in him, a tenderness for him, a wish to defend him. While she admired her handsome uncle, the Captain, it was her father whom she loved with all the devotion of her young soul.

He knew everybody, or nearly everybody, in the town, and treated every one, even his best friends, with a kind of ironical regard. He knew life well—all of it—and was rarely deceived by pretence or surprised by evil. Sometimes, I think, he armoured himself unnecessarily against goodness, lest he be deceived; but once having accepted a man, his

loyalty was unswerving. He believed, as he often said, that the big things in life are the little things, and it was his idea of a country newspaper that it should be crowded with all the little things possible.

"What's the protective tariff or the Philippine question to Nat Halstead compared with the price of potatoes?" he would ask.

He was not at all proud, for if he could not get his pay for his newspaper in cash he would take a ham, or a cord of wood, a champion squash, or a packet of circus tickets. One of Anthy's early memories was of an odd assortment of shoes which he had accepted in settlement of an advertising account. They never quite fitted any one.

As he grew older he liked to talk with Anthy about his business, as though she were a partner; he liked especially to have her in the office helping him, and he was always ready with a whimsical or wise comment on the people of the town. He also enjoyed making sly jokes about his older brother, the Captain, and especially about the Captain's thundering editorials (which Anthy for a long time secretly admired, wishing her father had written them).

"Now, Anthy," he would say, "don't dis-

turb your Uncle Newt; he's saving the nation," or "Pass this pamphlet along to your uncle; it will come in handy when he gets ready to regulate the railroads."

He was not an emotional man, at least to outward view; but once, on a Memorial Day, while the old soldiers were marching past the printing-office on their way to the cemetery, Anthy saw him standing by the window in his long apron, a composing stick in his hand, with the tears rolling unheeded down his face.

I think sometimes we do not yet appreciate the influence of that great burst of idealism, which was the Civil War, upon the lives of the men of that generation, nor the place which Lincoln played in moulding the characters of his time. Men who, even as boys, passed through the fire of that great time and learned to suffer with Lincoln, could never again be quite small. Although Anthy's father had not been a soldier—he was too young at the time—the most impressionable years of his boyhood were saturated with stories from the front, with the sight of soldiers marching forth to war, his own older brother, the Captain, among them, the sound of martial drums and fifes, and the heroic figures of wan and wounded

men who returned with empty sleeves or missing legs. He never forgot the thrill that came with the news of Lincoln's assassination.

There was a portrait of Lincoln over the cases at the office, and another over the mantel in the dining-room—the one that played so important a part, afterward, in Anthy's life.

Sometimes, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, Anthy's father would get down a certain volume from the cases, and read Tom Taylor's tribute to the dead Lincoln. She could recall vividly the intonation of his voice as he read the lines, and she knew just where he would falter and have to clear his throat:

You lay a wreath on murdered Lincoln's bier;
You, who with mocking pencil wont to trace,
Broad for the self-complaisant British sneer,
His length of shambling limb, his furrowed face,

His gaunt, gnarled hands, his unkempt, bristling hair,
His garb uncouth, his bearing ill at ease,
His lack of all we prize as debonair,
Of power or will to shine, or art to please . . . .

When he had finished reading, he would take off his spectacles and wipe them, and say to Anthy:

"Lincoln was the greatest man this country has ever produced."

He was a curious combination of hard-headedness, of ironical wisdom, and of humour, and somewhere, hidden deep within, of molten sentiment. He was a regular Yankee.

One night he got more than ordinarily tired, and just stopped. They found him in bed the next morning, his legs drawn up under the coverlet, a volume of Don Quixote open on his knees, his empty pipe fallen from his lips, the lamp dying out on a table near him. At his elbow were two of the inevitable yellow slips:

Squire Baker of Arnoville was a visitor at Lawyer Perkins's on Monday.

Apples stopped yesterday at Banks's store at 30 cents a peck—on their way up (adv).

He never knew what a hero he was: he had made a living for thirty years out of a country newspaper.

Anthy came home from college to the forlorn and empty and ugly house—and it seemed to her that the end of the world had come. This period of loneliness made a deep impres-

sion upon her later years. When at last she could bear to open the envelope labelled: "To Anthy—in case of my death," she found this letter:

DEAR ANTHY: I am leaving the *Star* to you. There is nothing else except the homestead—and the debts. Do what you like with all of them—but look after your Uncle Newt.

Now, Anthy's earliest memories were bound up with the printing-office. There was never a time that she did not know the smell of printer's ink. As a child she had delighted to tip over the big basket and play with the paper ribbons from the cutting machine. Later, she had helped on press days to fold and label the papers. She was early a past master in the art of making paste, and she knew better than any one else the temperamental eccentricities of the old-fashioned Dick labeller. She could set type (passably) and run the hand press. But as for taking upon herself the activities of her tireless father—who was at once editor, publisher, compositor, pressman, advertising solicitor, and father confessor for the community of Hempfield—she could not do it. There is only a genius here and there who can

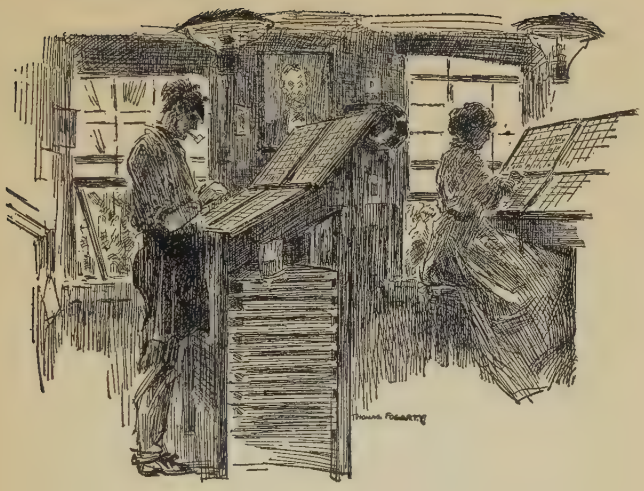
fill the high and difficult position of country editor.

The responsibility, therefore, fell upon the Captain, who for so many years had been the titular and ornamental editor of the *Star*. It was the Captain who wrote the editorials, the obituaries, and the "write-ups," who attended the political conventions, and was always much in demand for speeches at the Fourth of July celebrations.

But, strangely enough, although the *Star* editorials sparkled with undimmed lustre, although the obituaries were even longer and more wonderful than ever before—so long as to crowd out some of the items about Johnny Gorman's pigs and Mrs. Hopkins's visits to her sister, although the fine old Captain worked harder than ever, the light of the luminary of Hempfield grew steadily dimmer. Fergus saw it early and it distressed his Scotch soul. Anthy felt it, and soon the whole town knew of the decay of the once thrifty institution in the little old printing-office back from the street. Brother Kendrick, of that nefarious rag, the Sterling *Democrat*, even dared to respond to one of the Captain's most powerful and pungent editorials with a witticism in which he referred

to the *Weakly Star* of Hempfield, and printed "Weakly" in capital letters that no one might miss his joke.

It was at this low stage in the orbit of the *Star* that I came first to the printing-office, trying to discover the man who could shout "Fudge" with such fine enthusiasm—and found myself, quite irresistibly, hitching my wagon to the *Star*.



CHAPTER IV

ENTER MR. ED SMITH

IT IS only with difficulty thus far in my narrative that I have kept Norton Carr out of it. When you come to know him you will understand why. He is inseparably bound up with every memory I have of the printing-office. The other day, when I was describing my first visit to the establishment of Doane & Doane, I kept seeing the figure of Nort bending over the gasoline engine. I kept hearing him whistle in the infectious low monotone he had, and when I spoke of the printing press I all but

called it "Old Harry" (Nort christened the ancient Hoe press, Old Harry, which every one adopted as being an appropriate name). I even half expected to have him break out in my pages with one of his absurd remarks, when I knew well enough that he had no business to be in the story at all. He hadn't come yet, and Anthy and Fergus and the old Captain were positively the only ones there.

But Nort, however impatient he may be getting, will have to wait even a little while yet, for notable events were to occur in the printing-office just before he arrived, without which, indeed, he never could have arrived at all. If it had not been for the ploughing and harrowing of Ed Smith, painful as it was to that ancient and sedate institution, the Hempfield *Star*, there never would have been any harvest for Norton Carr, nor for me, nor for Anthy. So good may come even out of evil.

As I narrate these preliminary events, however, you will do well to keep in your thought a picture of Nort going about his pleasures—I fear, at that time, somewhat unsteadily—in the great city, not knowing in the least that chance, assisted by a troublesome organ within called a soul, was soon to deposit him in the

open streets of a town he had never heard of in all his life, but which was our own familiar town of Hempfield.

The thought of Nort looking rather mistily down the common—he was standing just in front of the Congregational Church—and asking, "What town am I in, anyhow?" lingers in my memory as one of the amusing things I have known.

Late in June I began to feel distinctly the premonitory rumblings and grumblings of the storm which was now rapidly gathering around the *Star*. It was a very clever Frenchman, I believe—though not clever enough to make me remember his name—who, upon observing certain disturbances in the farther reaches of the solar system, calculated by sheer mathematical genius that there was an enormous planet, infinitely distant from the sun, which nobody had yet discovered.

It was thus by certain signs of commotion in one of its issues that I recognized a portentous but undiscovered Neptune, which was plainly disturbing the course of the *Star*. A big new advertisement stared at me from the middle of the first page, and there was a certain crisp quality in some of the reading notices—from

which the letters "adv" had been suspiciously omitted—the origin of which I could not recognize. The second week the change was even more marked. There were several smart new headings: "Jots and Tittles from Littleton," I remember, was one of them, and even the sanctity of the editorial column had been invaded with an extraordinary production quite foreign to the Captain's pen. It was entitled:

"*All Together Now! Boost Hempfield!*"

I can scarcely describe how I was affected by these changes; but I should have realized that any man bold enough to hitch his wagon to a star must prepare himself for a swift course through the skies, and not take it amiss if he collides occasionally with the heavenly bodies.

I think it was secretly amusing to Harriet during the weeks that followed my first great visit to the printing-office to watch the eagerness with which I awaited the postman on the publication days of the *Star*. I even went out sometimes to meet him, and took the paper from his hand. I have been a devoted reader of books these many years, but I think I have never read anything with sharper interest than

I now began to read the *Star*. I picked out the various items, editorials, reading notices, and the like, and said to myself: "That's the old Captain's pungent pen," or "Anthy must have written that," or "I warrant the Scotchman, Fergus, had a finger in *that* pie." As I read the editorials I could fairly see the old Captain at his littered desk, the cat rubbing against his leg, the canary singing in the cage above him, and his head bent low as he wrote. And I was disturbed beyond measure by the signs of an unknown hand at work upon the *Star*.

"I thought, David, you did not care for country newspapers," said my sister.

She wore that comfortably superior smile which becomes her so well. The fact is, she *is* superior.

"Well," said I, "you may talk all you like about Browning and Carlyle——"

"I have not," said my sister, "referred to Browning or Carlyle."

"You may talk all you like"—I disdained her pointed interruption—"but for downright human nature here in the country, give me the Hempfield *Star*."

Once during these weeks I paid a short ob-

ligatory visit to the printing-office, and gave Anthy the name of my uncle in California and got the envelopes that had been printed for me. I also took in a number of paragraphs relating to affairs in our neighbourhood, and told Anthy (only I did not call her Anthy then) that if agreeable I would contribute occasionally to the *Star*. She seemed exceedingly grateful, and I liked her better than ever.

I also had a characteristic exchange with Fergus, in which, as usual, I came off worsted. In those troublous days Fergus was the toiling Atlas upon whose wiry shoulders rested the full weight of that heavenly body. He set most of the type, distributed it again, made up the forms, inked the rollers, printed the paper (for the most part), did all the job work which Hempfield afforded, and smoked the worst pipe in America.

When I told him that I was going to write regularly for the *Star* and showed him the paragraphs I had brought in (I suspect they *were* rather long) this was his remark:

"Oh, Lord, more writers!"

It was on this occasion, too, that I really made the acquaintance of the Captain. He was in the best of spirits. He told me how he

had beaten the rebels at Antietam. I enjoyed it all very much, and decided that for the time being I would suspend judgment on the pipe incident.

One day I reached the point where I could stand it no longer. So I hitched up the mare and drove to town. All the way along the road I tried to imagine what had taken place in the printing-office.

I thought with a sinking heart that the paper might have been sold, and that my new friends would go away. I thought that Anthy might be carrying out some new and vigorous plan of reconstruction, only somehow I could not feel Anthy's hand in the changes I had seen.

It was all very vivid to me; I had, indeed, a feeling, that afterward became familiar enough, that the *Star* was a living being, struggling, hoping, suffering, like one of us. In truth, it was just that.

No sooner had I turned in at the gate than I perceived that some mysterious and revolutionary force had really been at work. The gate itself had acquired two hinges where one had been quite sufficient before, and inside the office—what a change was there! It was not so much in actual rearrangement, though the

editorial desk looked barren and windswept; it was rather in the general atmosphere of the place. Even Tom, the cat, showed it: when I came in at the door he went out through the window. He was scared! No more would he curl himself contentedly to sleep in editorial chairs; no more make his bed in the office wastebasket. Though it was still early in the morning, Fergus was not reading "Tom Sawyer." No, Fergus was hard at work, and didn't even look around when I came in.

Anthy was there, too, in her long crisp gingham apron, which I always thought so well became her. She had just put down her composing stick, and was standing quite silent, with a curious air of absorption (which I did not then understand), before the dingy portrait of Lincoln on the wall just over the cases. On her desk, not far away, a book lay open. I saw it later: it was Rand's "Modern Classical Philosophers." It represented Anthy's last struggling effort to keep on with her college work. In spite of all the difficulties and distractions of the printing-office, she had never quite given up the hope that some day she might be able to go back and graduate. It

had been her fondest desire, the deepest purpose of her heart.

As she glanced quickly around at me I surprised on her face a curious look. How shall I describe it?—a look of exaltation, and of anxiety, too, I thought. But it passed like a flash, and she gave me a smile of friendly recognition, and stepped toward me with the frank and outright way she had. It gave me a curious deep thrill, not, I think, because she was a woman, a girl, and so very good to look upon, but because I suddenly saw her, the very spirit of her, as a fine, brave human being, fighting one of the hard and bitter fights of our common life. I do not pretend to know very much about women in general, and I think perhaps there is some truth in one of Nort's remarks, made long afterward:

"David's idea of generalizing about women," said that young upstart, "is to talk about Anthy without mentioning her name."

Is yours any different, Nort?—or *yours?*

Yes, I think it is true; and this I know because I know Anthy, that, however beautiful and charming a woman may be, as a woman, that which finally rings all the bells in the chambers of the souls of men are those quali-

ties which are above and beyond womanly charm, which are universal and human: as that she is brave, or simple, or noble in spirit.

That Anthy was deeply troubled on that summer morning I saw plainly when the Captain came, in the keen glance she gave him. He, too, seemed somehow changed, so unlike himself as to be almost gloomy. He gave me a sepulchral, "Good morning, sir," and sat down at his desk without even lighting his pipe.

Something tremendous, I could feel, was taking place there in the printing-office, and I said to Anthy—we had been talking about the paragraphs I brought in:

"What's been happening to the *Star* since I was here before?"

"You've discovered it, too!" she said with a whimsical smile. "Well, we're just now in process of being modernized." At this I heard Fergus snort behind me.

"Bein' busted, you mean," said he.

Fergus, besides being temperamentally unable to contain his opinions, had been so long the prop of the mechanical fortunes of the *Star* that he was a privileged character.

"I knew something was the matter," I said.

"As I was coming in I felt like saying, 'Fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishmun.'"

"Plain Yankee this time," said Fergus.

"Now, Fergus!" exclaimed Anthy severely. "You see," she continued, "we positively had to do something. The paper has been going downhill ever since my father's death. Father knew how to make it pay, even with half the families in town taking the cheap city dailies. But times are changing, and we've got to modernize or perish."

While she spoke with conviction, her words lacked enthusiasm, and they had, moreover, a certain cut-and-dried sound. "Times are changing. Modernize or perish!"

Anthy did not know it, of course, but she was living at the psychological moment in our history when the whole country was turning for salvation to that finished product, that perfect flower, of our institutions, the Practical Business Man. Was a city sick, or a church declining in its membership, or a college suffering from slow starvation, or a newspaper down with neurasthenia, why, call in a Practical Business Man. Let him administer up-to-date remedies; let him hustle, push, advertise.

It was thus, as an example of what the historian loves to call "remote causes," that Mr. Ed Smith came to Hempfield and the *Star*. He was a graduate of small-town journalism in its most progressive guises, and if any one was ever entitled to the degree of P. B. M. *cum laude*, it was Ed Smith.

He had come at Anthy's call—after having made certain eminently sound and satisfying financial arrangements. When it came finally to the issue, Anthy had seen that the only alternative to the extinction of the *Star* was some desperate and drastic remedy. And Ed Smith was that desperate and drastic remedy.

"I felt," she said to me, "that I must do everything I could to keep the *Star* alive. My father devoted all his life to it, and then, there was Uncle Newt—how could Uncle Newt live without a newspaper?"

I did not know until long afterward what the sacrifice had meant to Anthy. It meant not only a surrender of all her immediate hopes of completing her college work, but she was compelled to risk everything she had. First, she had borrowed all the money she could raise on the old home, and with this she paid off the accumulated debts of the *Star*. With the

remainder, which Ed Smith spoke of as Working Capital, she plunged into the unknown and venturesome seas of modernized journalism.

She had not gone to these lengths, however, without the advice of old Judge Fendall of Hempfield, one of her father's close friends, and a man I have long admired at a distance, a fine, sound old gentleman, with a vast respect for business and business men. Besides this, Anthy had known Ed for several years; he had called on her father, had, indeed, called on *her*.

It was bitter business for the old Captain to find himself, after so many glorious years, fallen upon such evil days. I have always been amused by the thought of the first meeting between Ed Smith and the Captain, as reported afterward by Fergus (with grim joy).

"Do you know," Ed asked the Captain, "the motto that I'd print on that door?"

The Captain didn't.

"*Push*," said he dramatically; "that's my motto."

I can see the old Captain drawing himself up to his full stature (he was about once and a half Ed's size).

"Well, sir," said he, "we need no such sign on

our door. Our door has stood wide open to our friends, sir, for thirty years."

When the old Captain began to be excessively polite, and to address a man as "sir," he who was wise sought shelter. It was the old Antietam spirit boiling within him. But Ed Smith blithely pursued his way, full of confidence in himself and in the god he worshipped, and it was one of Anthy's real triumphs, in those days of excursions and alarms, that she was able both to pacify the Captain and keep Fergus down.

Ed came in that morning while I was in the printing-office, a cheerful, quick-stepping, bold-eyed young fellow with a small neat moustache, his hat slightly tilted back, and a toothbrush in his vest pocket.

"You are the man," he said to me briskly, "that writes the stuff about the Corwin neighbourhood."

I acknowledged that I was.

"Good stuff," said he, "good stuff! Give us more of it. And can't you drum up a few new subs out there for us? Those farmers around you ought to be able to come up with the ready cash."

To save my life I couldn't help being in-

terested in him. It is one of the absurd contrarieties of human nature that no sooner do we decide that a man is not to be tolerated, that he is a villain, than we begin to grow tremendously interested in him. We want to see how he works. And the more deeply we get interested, the more we begin to see how human he is, in what a lot of ways he is exactly like us, or like some of the friends we love best—and usually we wind up by liking him, too.

It was so with Ed Smith. He let into my life a breath of fresh air, and of new and curious points of view. I think he felt my interest, too, and as I now look back upon it, I count his friendship as one of the things that helped to bind me more closely and intimately to the *Star*. While he was not at all sensitive, still he had already begun to feel that the glorious progress he had planned for the *Star* (and for himself) might not be as easy to secure as he had anticipated. He wanted friends in the office, friends of those he desired to be friendly with, especially Anthy. Besides, I was helping fill his columns without expense!

I had a good lively talk with him that morning. Before I had known him fifteen minutes he had expressed his opinion that the

old Captain was a "back number" and a "dodo," and that Fergus was a good fellow, but a "grouch." He confided in me that it was his principle, "when in Rome to do what the Romans do," but I wasn't certain whether this consisted, in his case, of being a dodo or a grouch. He was full of wise saws and modern instances, a regular Ben Franklin for wisdom in the art of getting ahead.

"When the cash is going around," said he, "I don't see why I shouldn't have a piece of it. Do you?"

He told me circumstantially all the reasons why he had come to Hempfield.

"I could have made a lot more money at Atterbury or Harlan Centre; they were both after me; but, confidentially, I couldn't resist the lady."

Well, Ed *was* wonderfully full of business. "Rustling" was a favourite word of his, and he exemplified it. He rustled. He got in several new advertisements, he published paid reading notices in the local column, a thing never before done on the *Star*. He persuaded the railroad company to print its time tables (at "our regular rates"), with the insinuation that if they didn't he'd . . . and he formed a

daring plan for organizing a Board of Trade in Hempfield to boost the town and thus secure both news and advertising for the *Star*. Oh, he made things lively!

Some men, looking out upon life, get its poetic implications, others see its moral significance, and here and there a man will see beauty in everything; but to Ed all views of life dissolved, like a moving picture, into dollars.

At first Fergus, that thrifty Scotch soul, was inclined to look with favour upon these new activities, for they promised well for the future prosperity of the *Star;* but this friendly tolerance was blasted as the result of a curious incident. Fergus had lived for several years in the back part of the printing-office. It was a small but comfortable room which had once been the kitchen of the house. In the course of his ravening excursions, seeking what he might devour, Ed Smith presently fell upon Fergus's room. Ed never could understand the enduring solidity of ancient institutions. Now Fergus's room, I am prone to admit, was not all that might have been desired, Fergus being a bachelor; but he was proud of it, and swept it out once a month, as he said, whether it needed it or not. Ed's innocent suggestion,

therefore, of a housecleaning was taken by Fergus as a deadly affront. He did not complain to Anthy, though he told *me*, and from that moment he began a silent, obstinate opposition to everything that Ed was, or thought, or did.

If it had not been for Anthy, Ed would indeed have had a hard time of it. But Anthy managed it, and in those days, hard as they were, she was finding herself, becoming a woman.

"Fergus," she said, "we're going to stand behind Ed Smith. We've *got* to work it out. It's our last chance, Fergus."

So Fergus stuck grimly to the cases, actually doing more work than he had done before in years; Tom, the cat, sat warily on the window sill, ready at a moment's notice to dive to safety; the old Captain was gloomy, and wrote fierce editorials on the Democratic party and on all "new-fangled notions" (especially flying machines and woman suffrage). His ironies about the "initiative, referendum, and recall" were particularly vitriolic during this period of his career. Anthy was the only cheerful person in the office.

It was some time in August, in the midst of these stirring events, when the *Star* was de-

Ed's innocent suggestion of a house-cleaning was taken by Fergus as a deadly affront

porting itself in such an unprecedented manner, that the Captain one day brought in what was destined to be one of the most famous news items, if not *the* most famous, ever published in the *Star*.

I was there at the time, and I can testify that he came in quite unconcernedly, though there was an evident look of disapproval upon his countenance. It was thus with the Captain, that nothing was news unless it stirred him to an opinion. An earthquake might have shaken down the Hempfield townhall or tipped over the Congregational Church, but the Captain might not have thought of putting the news in the paper unless it had occurred to him that the selectmen should have been on hand to prevent the earthquake, upon which he would have had a glorious article, not on the earthquake, but on the failure of a free American commonwealth, in this enlightened twentieth century, to secure efficiency in the conduct of the simplest of its public affairs.

But truly historic events get themselves reported even through the densest mediums. I saw the Captain with my own eyes as he wrote:

What has become of the officer of the law in Hempfield? A strange young man was seen coming down

Main Street yesterday afternoon in a condition which made him a sad example for the lads of Hempfield, many of whom were following him. Is this an orderly and law-abiding town or is it not?

I may say in passing that the Captain's inquiry: "What has become of the officer of the law in Hempfield?" was purely rhetorical. The Captain knew perfectly well where Steve Lewis was at that critical moment, for he had looked over the fence of Steve's yard as he passed, and saw that officer of the law, in a large blue apron, helping his wife hang out the week's washing. But how could one put that in the *Star?*

Such was the exact wording of that historic item. By some chance it did not meet the eagle eye of Ed Smith until the completely printed paper, still moist from the press, was placed in his hands. Then his eye fell upon it.

"Who wrote this item about a strange young man?" he asked.

"I think the Captain got it," said Anthy.

"Well!" exclaimed Ed, "that must be the very chap I have just hired to help Fergus."

He paused a moment, reflectively.

"I got him dirt cheap, too," said he.

And this was the way in which Norton Carr was plunged into the whirl of life at Hempfield.

CHAPTER V

NORT

I LOVE Norton Carr very much, as he well knows, but if I am to tell a truthful story I may as well admit, first as last, that Nort was never quite sure how it was that he got off, or was put off, at Hempfield. In making this admission, however, I do not for a moment accept all the absurd stories which are afloat regarding Nort's arrival in Hempfield.

He says the first thing he remembers clearly was of standing in the street at the top of our common, looking down into Hempfield—one of the finest views in our town. The exact historic spot where he stood was nearly in front of a small shoe shop, the one now kept by Tony, the Italian. If ever the Georgia Johnson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution runs out of places upon which to plant stones, tablets, trees, flowers, cannon balls, or drinking fountains, I would respectfully suggest raising a monument in front of Tony's shop with some such inscription as this:

Here Stood

NORTON CARR

On the Morning of His

INVOLUNTARY

Arrival in Hempfield

Nort walked down the street with a number of boys behind him—*three*, to be exact, *not* a "rabble." He was seen by old Mrs. Parker,

one of our most prominent journalists, who was, as usual, beating her doormat on the front porch. He was seen by Jared Sparks, who keeps the woodyard, and by Johnny McGonigal, who drives the hack; and finally he was caught by the eagle eye of the Press, in the person of Captain Doane, as I have already related, and his shame was published abroad to the world through the columns of the *Star*. As nearly as I can make out, for the facts regarding any given event in Hempfield often vary in adverse proportion to the square of the number of persons doing the reporting, the main indictment against Nort upon this occasion was that he appeared in town, a stranger without a hat. *Without a hat!*

I admit that he *did* stop in front of the Congregational Church; but I maintain that it is well worth any man's while to stop on a fine morning and look at our old church, with its mantle of ivy and the sparrows building their nests in the eaves. I admit also that he *did* make a bow, a low bow, to the spire, but I deny categorically Johnny McGonigal's absurd yarn that he said: "Good mornin', church. Shorry sheem disrespechtful." Any one who

knows Nort as well as I do would not consider his making a bow to a perfectly respectable old church as anything remarkable, or accusing him of having been intoxicated, save with the wine of spring and of youth. Why, I myself have often bowed to fine old oak trees and to hilltops. I wonder why it is that when small communities jump at conclusions, they so often jump the wrong way?

And yet I don't want to blame Hempfield. You can see for yourself what it would mean—a stranger, without a hat, bowing to the spire of the Congregational Church—what it would mean in a town which has religiously voted "dry" every spring since the local-option law went into effect, which abhors saloons, which resounds with the thunders of pulpit and press against the iniquity of drink, and where, if there are three or four places where the monster may be quietly devoured, no one is supposed to know anything about them.

I do not enlarge upon this picture of Nort with any delight, and yet I have always thought that it was a great help to Nort that he should have appeared in Hempfield in the guise of a vagabond.

If we had known then that he had the right

kind of a father, had come from the right kind of a college, and had already spent a good deal of money that he had not earned, I fear he would have been seriously handicapped. We should probably have looked the other way while he was bowing to the church—and considered that he was going without a hat for his health. As for putting him in the *Star*, we should never have dreamed of it!

I love to think of Nort, coming down our street for the first time—the green common with its wonderful tall elms on one side and the row of neat stores and offices on the other. It must be a real adventure to see Hempfield on a sunny morning with a new eye, to pass Henderson's drygoods store and catch the ginghamy whiff from the open doorway, or go by Mr. Tole's drug store and breathe in the aromatic odour of strange things that should be stoppered in glass bottles and aren't. And then the cool smell of newly watered sidewalks, and the good look of the tomatoes in their baskets, and the moist onions, and spinach, and radishes, and rhubarb in front of the shady market, and the sparrows fighting in the street —and everything quiet, and still, and homelike!

And think of coming unexpectedly (how I wish I could do it myself some day and wake up afterward to enjoy it) upon the wide doorway of John Bass's blacksmith shop, and see John himself standing there at his anvil with a hot horseshoe in his tongs. John never sings when his iron is in the fire, but the moment he gets his hand on his hammer and the iron on the horn of the anvil, then all the Baptist in him seems suddenly to effervesce, and he lifts his high and squeaky voice:

"Jeru (whack) salem (whack) the gold (whack) en (whack, whack),

"With milk (whack) and hon (whack) ey blest (whack, whack, whack)."

And what wouldn't I give to clap my eyes newly on old Mr. Kenton, standing there in front of his office, his florid face shaded by the porch roof, but the rotundity of his white waistcoat gleaming in the sunshine, his cane hooked over his arm, and himself looking benignly out upon the world of Hempfield as it flows by, ready to discuss with any one either the origin or the destiny of his neighbours.

At the corner above the post office Nort stopped and leaned against the fence, and looked up the street and down the street. His

John Bass's blacksmith shop

spirits were extremely low. He felt wholly miserable. He had not a notion in the world what he was going to do, did not at that time even know the name of the town he was in. It was indeed pure chance that had led him to Hempfield. If he had had a few cents more in his pocket it might have been Acton, or if a few cents less it might have been Roseburg. His only instinct, blurred at the moment, I am sorry to say, had been to get as far away from New York as possible—and Hempfield happened to be just about the limit of his means.

He was already of two minds as to whether he should give it all up and get back to New York as quickly as possible. He thought of dropping in on the most important man in town, say the banker, or the Congregational minister, and introducing himself in the rôle of contrite spendthrift or of remorseful prodigal, as the case might be—trust Nort for knowing how to do it—and by hook or crook raise enough money to take him back. He pictured himself sitting in the quiet study of the minister, looking sad, sad, and his mind lighted up with the wonderful things he could say to prove that of all the sheep that had bleated and gone astray since ever the world began, he was,

without any doubt, the darkest of hue. He sketched in the details with a sure touch. He could almost *see* the good old man's face, the look of commiseration gradually melting to one of pitying helpfulness. It would require only a very few dollars to get him back to New York.

He was on the point of carrying this interesting scheme into operation when the scenes and incidents of his recent life in New York swept over him, a mighty and inundating wave of black discouragement. Everything had been wrong with him from the beginning, it seemed to him that morning. He had not had the right parents, nor the right education, nor enough will power, nor any true friends, nor the proper kind of ambition.

When Satan first led Nort up on a high hill and offered him all the kingdoms of the earth, Nort had responded eagerly:

"Why, sure! I'll take em. Got any more where those come from?"

Nort's was an eager, curious, ardent, insatiable nature, which should have been held back rather than stimulated. No sooner had he stepped out into life than he wanted it all—everything that he could see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch—and all at once. I do not

He pictured himself sitting in the quiet study of the minister, looking sad, sad

mean by this that Nort was a vicious or abandoned character beyond the pale of his humankind. He had, indeed, done things that were wrong, that he knew were wrong, but thus far they had been tentative, experimental, springing not from any deeply vicious instincts but expressing, rather, his ardent curiosity about life.

I think sometimes that our common definition of dissipation is far too narrow. We confine it to crude excesses in the use of intoxicating liquor or the crude gratification of the passions; but often these are only the outward symbols of a more subtle inward disorder. The things of the world—a thousand clamouring interests, desires, possessions—have got the better of us. Men become drunken with the inordinate desire for owning things, and dissolute with ambition for political office. I knew a man once, a farmer, esteemed an upright man in our community, who debauched himself upon land; fed his appetite upon the happiness of his home, cheated his children of education, and himself went shabby, bookless, joyless, comfortless, that he might buy more land. I call that dissipation, too!

And in youth, when all the earth is very

beautiful, when our powers seem as limitless as our desires (I know, I know!), we stand like Samson, and for the sheer joy of testing our strength pull down the pillars of the temple of the world.

In Nort's case a supply of unearned money had enormously increased his power of seeing, hearing, feeling, doing; everything opened wide to the magic touch of the wand of youth, enthusiasm, money. He could neither live fast enough nor enjoy too much.

He had, indeed, had periods of sharp reaction. This was not the first time that the kingdoms of the earth, too easily possessed, had palled upon him, and he had resolved to escape. But he had never yet been quite strong enough; he had never gone quite low enough. The lure of that which was exciting or amusing or beautiful, above all, that which was or pretended to be friendly or companionable, had always proved too strong for him.

As time passed, and his naturally vigorous mind expanded—his body was never very robust—the reactions from the diversions with which his life was surrounded grew blacker and more desperate. In his moments of reflection he saw clearly where his path was leading him.

What a thing is youth! That sunny morning in Hempfield Nort thought that he was drinking the uttermost dregs of life—they <u>were</u> pretty bitter—and yet, somehow he was able to stand a little aside and enjoy it all

There was much in him, though never yet called out, of the native force of his stern old grandfather who had begun life a wage labourer, and in his moments of revolt, as men who dissipate crave that which is cold or bitter or sour, Nort had moments of intense longing for something hard, knotty, difficult, for hunger, cold, privation. Without knowing it, he was groping for reality.

And here he was in Hempfield, leaning against the fence of Mrs. Barrow's garden, desperately low in his spirits, at one moment wondering why he had come away, at the next feeling wretchedly that somehow this was his last chance. Fool! fool! His whole being loathed the discomfort of his pampered body, and yet he felt that if he gave up now he might never again have the courage to revolt.

What a thing is youth! That sunny morning in Hempfield Nort thought that he was drinking the uttermost dregs of life—they *were* pretty bitter—and yet, somehow, he was able to stand a little aside and enjoy it all. Black as it was, it had yet the mystical quality of a new adventure, new possibilities. At one moment Nort was hating himself, hating his whole life, hating the town in which fate had

dropped him, with all the passion of a naturally robust nature; and at the next he was peeping around the corner of the next adventure to see what he might see. The suffering of youth with honey in its mouth!

Oh, to be twenty-four! To feel that one has sounded all the chords of life, known every bitterness, to have become entirely disillusioned, wholly cynical, utterly reckless—and not to know that life and illusion have only just begun!

The hard, bristling, painful thing in his insides which Nort couldn't identify, wrongly attributing it to certain things he had been eating and drinking now for several days past, was in fact his soul.

How I love to think of Nort at that moment, that wonderful, fertile, despondent, hopeful, passionate moment. How I love to think of him, who is now so dear a friend, quite miserable, but with a half smile on his lips, his vigorous nature full of every conceivable possibility of good or evil, of success or failure, every capability of great love or great bitterness—— Nort, arm in arm with Life, tugged at by both God and Satan, standing there, aimless, in the sunny street of Hempfield.

CHAPTER VI

A MAN TO HELP FERGUS

IT WAS really a moment of vast potentialities when Nort turned *down* the street toward the town instead of *up* toward the railroad station and the open road. For down the street was the way to the printing-office and the old Captain and Anthy and Fergus and me, and all the things, big and little, I am about to relate. I tremble sometimes when I think how narrowly this story escaped not coming into existence at all.

It was upon this brief but historic journey that Ed Smith met Nort, and like any true newspaper man with a "nose for news,"

stopped to pass the time of day with the singular stranger. It took him not quite two seconds to "size up" Nort. It was easy for Ed to "size up" people, for he had just two classifications: those people whom he could use, and those who could use him. His problem of life thus became quite simple: it consisted in shifting as many as possible of those of the second classification into the first.

"If you would not be done by a man, do him first," was one of Ed's treasured Ben Franklinisms.

Nort was rather mistily in search of "something to do." Well, what could he do? It took some groping in his mind to discover any accomplishment whatever that was convertible into money, especially in a small town like Hempfield. Finally he said he knew "something about machinery"—he did not specify automobiles—and by some wild chance mentioned the fact that he had once worked in a newspaper office (two months—and was dreadfully tired of it).

Now, Ed Smith was as sharp as any lightning known in our part of the world, and there being nothing he loved better than a "bold stroke" in which he could "close a deal" and

do it "on the spot," it took him not above five minutes to offer Nort a trial in the office of the *Star* at wages which approximated nothing at all. If he could "make good," etc., etc., why, there were great opportunities, etc., etc. It was not the first time that Ed had dealt with tramp printers! And Nort, still low in his mind and quite prepared for anything, agreed to come.

Your sharp, shrewd man can deal profitably with the ninety-nine men who walk or run or burrow or climb, especially if they happen to look seedy, but he is never quite prepared for the hundredth man who can fly. That is, it sometimes happens that a man who has been comfortably ensconced in the pigeonhole labelled, "To Be Done," is suddenly—and by some hocus-pocus which your sharp one can never quite comprehend, and considers unfair —is suddenly discovered to have disappeared, evaporated, to have escaped classification. I throw in this observation at this point for what it may be worth, and not because I have anything against Ed Smith. We may think a woodpecker's bill to be entirely too long for beauty, but it is fine for the woodpecker. Moreover, I cannot forget that without Ed

Smith the Hempfield *Star* would never have seen Nort.

How well I remember my first sight of the "man to help Fergus!" It was about two days, I think, after his arrival, and at a time when the *Star* was twinkling in the most extraordinary and energetic fashion. You could almost *hear* it twinkle. As I came into the office Anthy and Fergus were busy at their cases, the old Captain at his desk, Ed Smith in shirtsleeves was making up a new advertisement, and Dick, the canary, swinging in the window. But what was that strange object in the corner on the floor?

Why, Nort, sprawled full length, with his head almost touching the gasoline engine! He had parts of it pretty well distributed around him on the floor, and as nearly as I could make out, was trying to get his nose into the boiler, or barrel, or whatever the insides of a gasoline engine are called. Also he was whistling, as he loved to do, in a low monotone, apparently enjoying himself. Presently he glanced up at me.

"Ever study the anatomy of a gasoline engine?" he asked.

"Never," said I.

"Interesting study," said he.

"I know something about the anatomy of cows and pigs and hens," I said, "but I suppose a gasoline engine is somewhat different."

"Somewhat," said he.

He tinkered away industriously for a moment, and when I continued to stand there watching him, he inquired solemnly:

"A hen has no spark coil, has it?"

"No," I said, just as solemnly, "but neither can a gasoline engine cackle."

I shall never forget the sight of Nort as he slowly rose to a sitting position and looked me over—especially the smile of him and the gleam in his eyes. There was a dab of oil on his nose and smudges on his chin, but he took me in.

So this was the person who had appeared without a hat on our highly respectable streets, and got his shame heralded in the paper! I felt like saying to him:

"Well, you're a cheerful reprobate, I must say!"

You see, we are nearly all of us shocked by the cheerfulness of the wicked. We feel that those whom we have set aside as reprobates, or sinful spectacles, should by good right draw long faces and be appropriately miserable; and

we never become quite accustomed to our own surprise at finding them happy or contented.

In short, I began to be interested in that reprobate, in spite of myself. I had come to town intending to have a talk with Anthy and the old Captain (who was at this moment at work at his desk), but instead I squatted down on the floor near Nort, and while he tinkered and puttered and whistled, we kept up a running conversation which we both found highly diverting.

If there is one thing I enjoy more than another it is to crack open a hard fellow-mortal, take him apart, as Nort was taking apart his engine, and see what it is that makes him go round. But in Nort, that morning, I found more than a match. We parried and fenced, advanced and retreated, but beyond a firm conclusion on my part that he was no ordinary tramp printer and, indeed, no ordinary human being, he kept me completely mystified, and, as I could plainly see, enjoyed doing it, too. He told me, long afterward, that he thought me that morning an "odd one."

I deny, however, that I was carried away on the spot; I was interested, but I was now too

deeply concerned for my friends on the *Star* to accept him entirely. Even after he brought in his first contribution to our columns, especially the one that began, "There is a man in this town who quarrels regularly with his wife," I was still doubtful about him—but I must not get ahead of my story.

Well, it was wonderful the way Nort went through the office of the *Star*. As I think of it now, I am reminded of the description of a remarkable plant called the lantana, which I read about recently in an interesting book on the Hawaiian Islands. It was brought in, a humble and lowly shrub, to help ornament a garden in those delectable isles. Finding the climate highly agreeable and its customary enemies absent, it escaped from the garden, and in a wild spirit of vagabondage spread out along the sunny roads and mountainsides, until it has overrun all the islands; and from being an insignificant shrub, it now grows to the size of a small tree. Most painful to relate, however, the once admired shrub has become a veritable pest, and the people of the islands are using their ingenuity in seeking a way to destroy it.

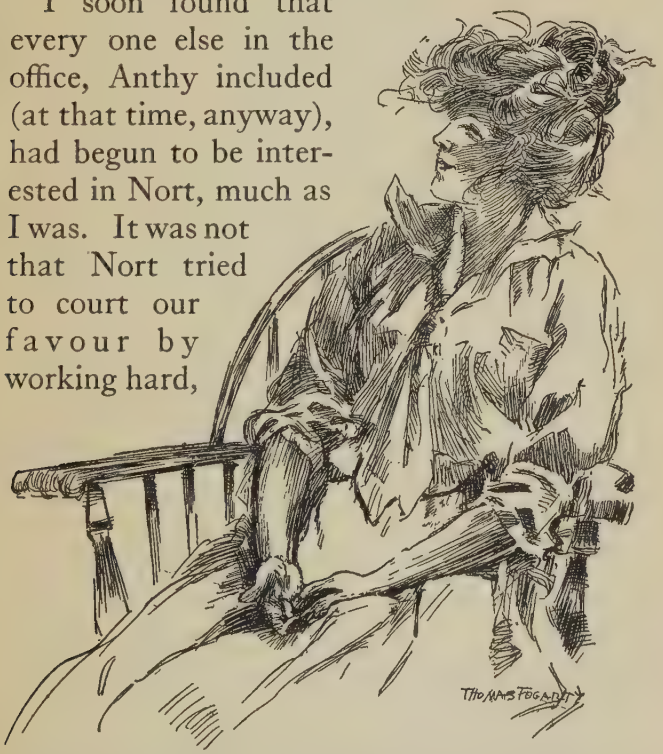
Now, that is very much the early history of Nort in the office of the *Star*. At first, of

course, he was way down in the depths, both in his own estimation and in ours—a man to tinker the engine, run the job presses, sweep the floors, and do the thousand and one other useful but menial things to help Fergus. Moreover, he was on his good behaviour and more than ordinarily subdued. It required a reasonable amount of good honest depression in those days to make Nort tolerable. He was like a high-spirited horse that has to be driven hard for a dozen miles before it is any pleasure to hold the reins. If we had known then—but we knew nothing.

There are two ways by which men advance in this world—one is by doing, the other by being. We Americans, these many years, have been cultivating and stimulating the doers. We have made the doers our heroes, and have, therefore, had no poetry, no art, no music, no personality, and, I was going to say, no religion. Doing leads the way to riches, power, reputation, and if it occasionally lands a man in the penitentiary, still we feel that there is something grand about it, and reflect that the same process also leads to the Senate or the White House or a palace on Fifth Avenue. Ed Smith was a doer, but Nort was

only a be-er. And Nort didn't even *try* to be: he just was. And we planted him, a humble shrub, in the garden of our lives, and in no time at all the vagabond had spread to the sunny uplands of our hearts. And then——

I soon found that every one else in the office, Anthy included (at that time, anyway), had begun to be interested in Nort, much as I was. It was not that Nort tried to court our favour by working hard,



I soon found that every one else in the office, Anthy included, had begun to be interested in Nort

being sober, appearing willing, in order to get ahead; that would have been Ed Smith's way; but Nort had never in all his short life thought of getting ahead. Of whom was he to get ahead? And why should he get ahead?

The fact is that Nort, caught in the rebound from a life that had become temporarily intolerable, found the quietude of Hempfield soothing to him; and the life of the printing-office was so different as to be momentarily amusing to his royal highness. We were a new toy—that's what we were: the rag baby for which the pampered child of wealth temporarily discards her French dolls.

It was a fortunate thing that Ed started Nort at once on the task of overhauling the gasoline engine, for it was one of the things that he had always loved to do. When he had finished the engine, he must clean up and repair the belts and pulley that operated the press, and this led him naturally to the press itself, an ancient Hoe model with heavy springs below that operated the running table. By this time he had begun really to wake up, and as he worked, hummed like a hive of bees. He called the press "Old Harry," and gave it such a cleaning up as it had not had since the early days of

Anthy's father. All this seemed to amuse him very much, for he imagined things with his fingers. It also amused us, he was so tremendously interested and so personal about it all. He was forever calling in Fergus, never Ed Smith, with such remarks as these:

"How does she look now, Fergus? Will she stand for a little stiffer spring, you think? She's a good one, eh, Fergus, for her age?" And so on, and so on.

During these days I watched Fergus with almost as much interest as I watched Nort. He seemed nonplussed. He was like a hen that has unexpectedly hatched a duckling. At one moment he seemed resentful at this uprooting of ancient and settled institutions, and he was a little angry all the time at being carried along by Nort's enthusiasm, for he was constitutionally suspicious of enthusiasm; but, on the other hand, he could not resist the constant appeals to his superior judgment. When deferred to he would drop his head a little to one side, partially close one eye, draw down the corners of his mouth, and after smoking furiously for a few puffs, would take out his pipe and remark:

"Wull, it looks to me——" etc., etc.

As he gave his opinion I could see the live

gleam in Nort's eyes, and I knew that he was finding almost as much amusement in tinkering Fergus as he found in tinkering the old press. I think that Fergus liked Nort from the very first, but wild horses could not have dragged a favourable opinion of him out of Fergus. Fergus had a deeply ingrained conviction that no man should think more highly of himself than he ought to think, and lost no opportunity of reducing bumps of self-esteem, wherever discovered.

Having finished the old press, Nort's lively mind began to consider what might be done with a perfectly healthy gasoline engine sitting in the corner and wasting most of its time. He fitted up a new belt and pulley to run the two small presses and, there being at that moment quite a job of posters to run off, thrilled the office with the speed and ease with which the work could be done. All this delighted Ed Smith, for it was "something doing"—and didn't cost much: although I think he had already begun to regard it as a suspicious sign that Nort, having fully recovered his spirits, did not demand an immediate increase in wages. It was the first of several unpredictable events quite outside the range of Ed's experience.

As for the old Captain, he was stoutly opposed to it all. He called it Ed-Smithism and refused to countenance it in any way. For thirty years the *Star* had been a power in the councils of Westmoreland County (said the Captain). Why, then, these sensational changes? Why this rank commercialism? Why all this confusion?

"I am a reasonable person, as you know, Anthy," said the Captain; "I believe in progress. The earth moves, the suns revolve, but all this business of Ed Smith is bosh, plain, unadulterated bosh!"

"But, Uncle——" Anthy was still earnestly trying to keep peace in the office.

"Fudge!" roared the Captain, and then, seeing that he had pained Anthy, he was all contrition at once, threw one arm about her shoulders and, regaining his usual jaunty air, remarked:

"Never mind, Anthy. I am a patient man. I will await the progress of events."

He was firmly convinced that Ed Smith and all his contraptions would soon be abolished from the office of the *Star*.

As to Nort—the Captain did not at first see him at all. He was an Ed-Smithism, and the

Captain could not get over his first sight of Nort, a spectacle in the streets of Hempfield. After the job presses began to work by power, following a suggestion which it seems the Captain had made in 1899, he apparently discovered Nort afar off, as though looking through the big end of a spy-glass.

What was our astonishment, therefore, one evening to find the old Captain and Nort engaged in a most extraordinary and secretive enterprise. By chance we saw an unusual light in the front office—Fergus's light was in the rear—and went in to investigate. A step-ladder stood in the middle of the floor. Upon this was perched the old Captain, coat off, white hair rumpled, head almost touching the ceiling, hammer in hand.

"There!" he was saying.

He had been sounding the plaster on the ceiling to find a certain stringer. Nort, just below, was gazing up with a half smile on his lips and that look of live amusement, yes, deviltry, which came too easily to his eyes.

"Found her, have you, Cap'n?" he was inquiring.

"Here she is," responded the Captain triumphantly.

And then they saw Fergus and me—the Captain looking very sheepish and Nort like a bad boy caught in the jam closet.

Just how Nort did it I never knew exactly, but those two precious partners in mischief were engaged in quite the most extraordinary innovation in the staid old office that had yet been conceived.

"Something to cool the Captain's head," was the way Nort described it. It was hot weather, doubly hot in the office of the *Star*, surrounded as it was by taller buildings, and the Captain especially suffered from the heat. In some way Nort had led him guilefully into the scheme of installing a fan on the ceiling of the office, and, what is more, had made the Captain believe it was his own idea. The old Captain was in reality as simple hearted as a child, and once he and Nort had agreed upon the plan, it delighted him to carry it forward secretly and "surprise Anthy," as he was always surprising her with some one or another of his extravagances. Afterward, when he referred to the great new scheme it was at first: "We had the idea," "We thought," "We worked it out." But in no time at all, it had become, "I had the idea," "I thought." And when visitors came

in to see the wonderful new fan waving its majestic wooden arms over the devoted heads of the staff of the *Star*, you would have thought the old Captain did it all himself.

I laugh yet when I think of the first few moments of the operation of Nort's invention. We had all been a good deal excited about it, Ed not exactly with approval, although it was a good "ad" for the *Star*—but the old Captain was quite beside himself.

"How are you getting along, Nort?" he began inquiring early in the afternoon of the great day.

He had been particular at first to speak to Nort as "Carr," indicating purely formal relationship, but in the enthusiasm of putting up the fan he soon dropped into the familiar "Nort."

"Fine, Cap'n, we'll have her running now in no time."

"Good!"

"We'll cool your head yet, Cap'n."

"I'm waiting, Nort."

When Nort finally gave the word, the old Captain drew his lame-legged chair squarely under the fan, sat himself down in it, and stretching out luxuriously, leaned his beautiful

old head a little back. I saw the Grand Army button on his coat.

"Whir!" went the fan. The Captain's white hair began to flutter. He sat a moment in ecstatic silence, closing and opening his eyes, and taking a deep breath or two. Then he said:

"Cool as a cucumber, Anthy, cool as a cucumber."

Fergus barked away down inside somewhere, his excuse for a laugh.

"Now, Anthy," said the Captain, "this was to be your surprise."

So he had Anthy sit down in the chair.

"Fine, isn't it?" said he, "regular breeze from Labrador. Greenland's icy mountains."

"Fine!" responded Anthy.

As Anthy sat there, the fan stirring her light hair, a smile on her lips, I saw Nort looking at her in a curious, amused, puzzled way, as though he had just seen her for the first time and couldn't quite account for her. I myself thought she looked a little sad around the eyes: it came to me, indeed, suddenly, what a fine, strong face she had. She sat with her chin slightly lifted, her hands in her lap, an odd, still way she sometimes had. Since I first met

Anthy, that day in the office of the *Star*, I had come to like her better and better. And somehow, deep down inside, I didn't quite like Nort's look.

"We can show 'em a thing or two, eh, Nort?" the Captain was saying.

"We can, Cap'n."

After that, no matter what happened, the Captain swore by Nort. He was a loyal old fellow, and whatever your views might be, whatever you may have done, even though you had sunk to the depths of being a Democrat, if he once came to love you, nothing else mattered. I have sometimes thought that the old Captain really had a deeper influence upon Nort during the weeks that followed than any of us imagined.

This incident of the fan marked the apogee of the first stage of Nort's career in the office of the *Star*. It was the era of Nort the subdued; and preceded the era of Nort the obstreperous.

CHAPTER VII

PHAËTON DRIVES THE CHARIOT OF THE "STAR"

I FIND myself loitering unaccountably over every memory of those days in the office of the *Star*. Not a week passed that I did not make two or three or more trips from my farm to Hempfield, sometimes tramping by the short cut across the fields and through the lanes, sometimes driving my old mare in the town road, and always with the problems of Anthy and Nort uppermost in my mind. Sometimes when I could get away, and sometimes when I couldn't (Harriet smiling discreetly), I went up in the daytime to lend a hand in the office (especially on press days), and often in the evening I went for a talk with Nort or Anthy

or the old Captain, or else for a good comfortable silence with Fergus while he sat tipped back in his chair on the little porch of the office, and smoked a pipe or so—and the daylight slowly went out, the moist evening odours rose up from the garden, and the noises in the street quieted down.

As I have said, the incident of the fan marked the end of the era of Nort the subdued. From that time onward, for a time, it was Nort the ascendant—yes, Nort the obstreperous! As I look back upon it now I have an amusing vision of one after another of us hanging desperately to the coat tails of our Phaëton to prevent him from driving the chariot of the *Star* quite to destruction.

It was this way with Nort. He had begun to recover from the remorse and discouragement which had brought him to Hempfield. If he had been in the city he would probably have felt so thoroughly restored and so virtuous that he would have sought out his old companions and plunged with renewed zest into the old life of excitement. But being in the quiet of the country he had to find some outlet for his high spirits, some food for his curious, lively, inventive mind. What a fascinator he was in

those days, anyway! I think he put his spell upon all of us, even to a certain extent upon Ed Smith at first. To me, in particular, who have grown perhaps too reflective, too introspective, with the years of quietude on my farm, he seemed incredibly alive, so that I was never tired of watching him. He was like the boy I had been, or dreamed I had been, and could never be again.

And yet I did not then accept him utterly, as the loyal old Captain had done. I was not sure of him. His attitude toward life in those days, while I dislike the comparison, was similar to that of Ed Smith, though the end was different. If Ed was looking for his own aggrandizement, Nort was not the less eagerly in pursuit of his own amusement and pleasure. I had a feeling that he would play with us a while because we amused him, and when he got tired or bored—that would be the end of us. Up to that moment Nort had never really become entangled with life: life had never hurt him. Things and events were like moving pictures, which he enjoyed hotly, which amused him uproariously, or which bored him desperately.

As fate would have it—Ed Smith's fate—Nort's opportunity came in August. It was

the occasion, as I remember it, of some outing of the State Editors' Association, and Ed planned to be absent for two weeks. He evidently felt that he could now entrust the destinies of the *Star* for a brief time to his associates. But he tore himself away with evident reluctance. How could the *Star* be safely left to the mercies of the old Captain (who had been its titular editor for thirty years), or to Anthy (who was merely its owner), to say nothing of such disturbing elements as Fergus and Nort and me?

A deep sigh of relief seemed to rise from the office of the *Star*. One fancied that Dick, the canary, chirped more cheerfully, and Fergus swore that he found Tom, the cat, sleeping in the editorial chair within three hours after Ed departed. As for the Captain, he came in thumping his cane and clearing his throat with something of his old-time energy, and even Anthy wore a different look.

I can see Nort yet leaning against the imposing stone, one leg crossed over the other, his bare inky arms folded negligently, his thick hair tumbling about on his head—and amusement darkening in his eyes. Fergus was cocked up on a stool by the cases; the Captain,

"Well!" exclaimed Nort, drawing a long breath, "I never imagined it would feel so good to be orfunts"

who had just finished an editorial further pulverizing the fragments of William J. Bryan, was leaning back in his chair comfortably smoking his pipe; and Anthy, having slipped off her apron, was preparing to go home for supper.

"Well!" exclaimed Nort, drawing a long breath, "I never imagined it would feel so good to be orfunts."

The laugh which followed this remark was as irresistible as it was spontaneous. It expressed exactly what we all felt. I glanced at Anthy. She evidently considered it her duty to frown upon such disloyalty, but couldn't. She was laughing, too. It seemed to break the tension and bring us all close together.

It will be seen from this how Nort had been growing since he came with us, a mere vagabond, to help Fergus. He had become one of us.

"Don't see how we're ever goin' to get out a paper," remarked Fergus.

This bit of irony was lost on the old Captain.

"Fudge!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Get out a paper! We were publishing the *Star* in Hempfield before ever Ed Smith was born."

"I'll tell you what, Cap'n—and Miss Doane," said Nort, "we ought to get out a

paper this week that will show Ed a thing or two, stir things up a bit."

I saw Anthy turn toward him with a curious live look in her eyes. Youth had spoken to youth.

"We could do it!" she said, with unexpected energy. "We could just do it."

Nort unfurled his legs and walked nervously down the office.

"What would you put in her?" asked the practical Fergus.

"Put in her!" exclaimed Nort. "What couldn't you put in her? Put some life in her, I say. Stir things up."

"I have just written an editorial on William J. Bryan," remarked the Captain with deliberation.

"My father always used to say," said Anthy, "that the little things of life are really the big things. I didn't used to think so; it used to hurt me to see him waste his life writing items about the visits of the Backuses—you know what visitors the Backuses are—and the big squashes raised by Jim Palmer, and the meetings of the Masons and the Odd Fellows; but I believe he was successful with the *Star* because he packed it full of just such little personal news."

"Your father," I said, "was interested in people, in everything they did. It was what he *was*."

"I see that now," said Anthy.

"And when you come to think of it," I said, "we are more interested in people we know than in people we don't know. We can't escape our own neighbourhoods—and most of us don't want to."

"That's all right," said Nort; "but it seems to me since I've been in this town that it is just the things that are most interesting of all that don't get into the *Star*. Why, there's more amusing and thrilling news about Hempfield published every day up there on the veranda of the Hempfield House than gets into the *Star* in a month. I could publish a paper, at least once, that would——"

"I have always said," interrupted the Captain, "that the basic human interest was politics. Politics is the life of the people. Politics——"

Fergus's face cracked open with a smile.

"We might print a few poems."

He said it in such a tone of ironical humour and it seemed so absurd that we all laughed, except Nort.

Nort stopped suddenly, with his eyes gleaming.

"Why not, Fergus?" he exclaimed. "Great idea, Fergus."

With that he took up an envelope from the desk.

"Listen to this now," he said, "it came this morning; the Cap'n showed it to me."

He read aloud with great effect:

A PLEA FOR THE BALLOT

There was a maiden all forlorn,
Who milked a cow with a crumpled horn,
She churned the butter, and made the cheese,
And taught her brothers their A B C's.

She worked and scrubbed till her back was broke,
And paid her tax, but she couldn't vote.
Oh! you men look wise and laugh us to scorn,
We'll get the ballot as sure as you're born.

"I can guess who wrote *that!*" laughed Anthy. "It was Sophia Rhinehart."

"You're right," said Nort, "and I say, print it."

"There's a whole drawer full of poetry like that here in the desk," observed the Captain.

"I'll tell you, let's print it all!" said Nort.

"This town is full of poetry. Let's let it out. That's a part of the life of Hempfield which the *Star* hasn't considered."

For the life of me I could not tell at the moment whether Nort was joking or not, but Fergus was troubled with no such uncertainty. He took his pipe out of his mouth, poked down the fire with his thumb, and observed:

"'Tain't poetry."

Anthy laughed. "No," she said, "it isn't Robert Burns. Fergus measures everything by 'The Twa Dogs.'"

"Whur'll ye do better?" responded Fergus.

"No," said Nort, warming up to his argument and convincing himself, I think, as he went along, "but I say it's interesting, and it's by people in Hempfield, and it's news. What could be a better personal item than a poem by —who was it, Miss Doane?"

"Sophia Rhinehart."

"The poet Sophia! Think of all of Sophia's cousins and uncles and aunts, and all the people in Hempfield, who will be shocked to know that Sophia has written a poem on woman suffrage."

"That's what I object to," boomed the Captain, "it's nonsense."

As I look back upon it now, it seems absurd, the irresistible way in which Nort swept the orfunts of the *Star* before him in his enthusiasm. A country newspaper office is one of the most democratic institutions in the world. The whole force, from proprietor down, works together and changes work. The editor is also compositor, and the compositor and office boy are reporters. No one poses as having any very superior knowledge, and it sometimes happens that a printer, like Fergus, comfortably drawing his regular wages, is better off for weeks at a time than the harassed proprietor himself.

Nort drew the poems, a big disorderly package of them, out of the editorial drawer, and read some of them aloud in his best manner, his face gleaming with amusement. Occasionally he would glance across at Anthy as if for approval. Anthy's face was a study. While it was evident that she was puzzled and uncertain, I could see that Nort was carrying her wholly with him. It was the common spirit of youth, adventure, daring—the common joy of revolt.

The upshot of the matter was that the office worked early and late during the next two or

three days setting poetry. We chose mostly the short poems, including a veritable school of limericks, and in each case printed the name of the author in good large type. Some of the verses, to judge by their appearance, must have been in the office for several years—from the days of Anthy's father. Anthy's father had never destroyed the verses sent to him; he kept them, but rarely printed any of them. He had so deep a fondness for human beings, understood them so well, and Hempfield had come to be so much his own family to him, that he kept all these curious outreachings, whether of sorrow, or humour, or of mere empty exuberance or sentimentality. Often he laughed at them—but he kept them. Anthy had much the same deep feeling—which the Nort of that time could not have understood. She felt that there was something not quite sound about Nort's brilliant scheme, but when she objected or protested about some particular poem, Nort always swept her away with his eager, "Oh, put her in, put her in!"

For the top of the page Fergus set a heading, proofed it, and showed it to Nort.

"Not big enough," said Nort. "Got anything larger?"

Fergus thought he had, and presently returned with a heading in regular poster type:

POEMS OF HEMPFIELD

I can see Nort yet, holding it up for us to view, and shouting:

"Bully boy, Fergus, that'll get 'em!"

We introduced the poetry with a statement that for several years the *Star* had received poems, written by the citizens of the town and county, very few of which had been published. We presented them to our readers as one expression of the life, thought, and interests of our town.

On Wednesday—we went to press Wednesday afternoon—Nort came in from dinner with a broad smile on his face.

"Got another poem," he said.

"Humph," growled Fergus, who knew that he would have to set it up.

"I stopped at the corner as I came along, and old John Tole was standing out in front of his store." Here Nort, thrusting both hands into his rear trousers pockets, leaned a little back and gave a perfect imitation of the familiar figure of our town druggist. "'Mr.

Tole,' I said, 'the *Star* is going to print the poems of Hempfield this week. Haven't you a favourite poem you can put in?' Well, you should have seen the old fellow grin. 'Yes,' says he, 'I've got a favour-ite poem.' I asked him what it was. He kept on smiling, and finally he said:

> "'I keep a plaster, in case of disaster,
> And also a pill, in case of an ill.'"

Nort shook with laughter.

"George! I wish you could have heard him repeat it: 'And also a pi-ll in case of an i-ll.'"

He had the whole office laughing with him.

"I say, let's put it in the *Star!* 'John Tole's Favourite Poem.' What do you say, Miss Doane?"

He stood there such a figure of irresponsible and contagious youth as I can never forget.

"Tole hasn't favoured the *Star* with any advertising for over twenty years," observed the Captain.

"We'll advertise him, anyhow," said Nort.

And so it went in, at a special place in the middle of the page. Fergus grumbled and growled, of course, but was really more inter-

ested and excited, I think, than he had been before in years. "Fergus's great idea," "Fergus's brilliant thought," was the way Nort referred to the printing of the poetry. For two people so utterly unlike, Fergus and Nort got an extraordinary amount of amusement out of each other.

In order to make room for the poetry something else, of course, had to be left out, and partly by chance and partly through the antagonism of the Captain, we omitted two paragraphs that Ed Smith had left on the stone for use in the next issue of the paper. One was a flattering comment on the new electric light company that was about to supply Hempfield and other nearby towns with current.

"Seems to me," said Fergus, "we've had enough electric light news for a while."

"Cut her out, then," said Nort, as though he owned the paper.

The other was a cleverly worded paragraph about the candidacy of a certain D. J. McCullum for the legislature. When the Captain saw it he snorted with indignation.

"A regular old Democrat!" he exclaimed.

"Now what was Ed Smith thinking of—putting a piece like that in the paper?"

We little knew what consequences were to follow upon a matter so apparently trivial as the omission of these few sticks of type from the *Star*.

At last the forms were locked, and Nort and Fergus carried them over to the press. It was an exciting occasion. Fergus at the press!

Usually Fergus contents himself by going about wearing his own crown of stiff red hair, but on press days he takes down an antique derby hat, the rim of which long ago disappeared. Small triangular holes have been cut in the crown for ventilators, and the outside is decorated with dabs of vari-coloured printer's ink. This bowl of a helmet Fergus sets upon his head, tilted a little back, so that he looks like a dervish. He now selects a long black cigar—it is only on press days that he discards his precious pipe—and having lighted it holds it in his mouth so that it points upward at an acute angle. He avoids the smoke which would naturally rise into his left eye by inclining his head a little to one side. He tinkers the rollers, he examines

the inkwells, he tightens in the forms. He is very dignified, very sententious. It is an important occasion when Fergus goes to press. At last, when all is ready, Fergus stands upright for a moment, a figure of power and authority.

"Let 'er go," he says presently.

Nort pulls the lever: the fly moves majestically through the air, the rollers clack, and the very floor shakes with the emotion, the pain, of producing a free press in a free country.

But it is only for one or two impressions. Fergus suddenly raises his hand.

"Stop her, stop her," he commands, and when she has calmed down, Fergus, comparing the imprint with the form, and armed with paste pot and paper, or with block and mallet, adds the final artistic touches.

Sometimes, sitting here in my study, if I am a little lonely, I have only to call up the picture I have of Fergus at the press, and I am restored and comforted by the thought that there are still pleasant and amusing things in this world.

So we printed off the famous issue containing the poetry of Hempfield—and folded and

mailed the papers. Nort, working like a demon, was the soul of the office. He made the work that week seem more interesting and important; he made an adventure and a romance out of the common task of a country printing-office.

CHAPTER VIII

NORT AND ANTHY

IT WAS on this night, after the last copy of the edition had been disposed of, that Nort walked home for the first time with Anthy. He carried it off perfectly. When she was ready to go—I remember just how she looked, her slight firm figure pausing with hand on the door, the flush of excitement and interest still in her face.

"Good-night, everybody," she was saying.

"Well, we've printed a paper this week, anyhow," said Nort.

Anthy laughed: she had a fine clear laugh,

not loud, but sweet, the kind of a laugh one remembers long afterward.

"Hold on, Miss Doane," said Nort, starting up suddenly, as if the thought had just occurred to him, "I'm going with you."

He jumped for his coat. Anthy remained, still without moving, at the door. I chanced to glance at Fergus and saw him bite down on his pipe—I saw the scowl that darkened his face.

So they went out together. A moment later I went out, too, and as I crossed the street on my way toward home I heard Anthy's voice through the night air, no words, just the inflection I had come to know so well, and then Nort's laugh. I stopped and looked back at the printing-office, half hidden in the shadows of its garden. A dim light still burned in the window. I saw Fergus come out and look down the street in the direction that Nort and Anthy had gone, look thus for some time, and go in again. And so I turned again homeward for my lonely walk under the stars.

Life has been good to me, and as I look back upon it no one thing seems more precious than the thought that I have been much

trusted with deep things in the lives of other men and women. Next to living great things for one's self (we learn by and by to put that aside) it is wonderful to be *lived through*. It is wonderful to know a human soul, and ask nothing of it, nothing at all, save its utter confidence.

I know what took place that night when Nort first walked home with Anthy almost as well as though I had been with them. And I know how Fergus felt, Fergus who had known Anthy's father, who had seen Anthy grow up from a slim, eager, somewhat dreamy child to the woman she was now.

What do you suppose Nort and Anthy talked about? About themselves? Not a bit of it! They began by talking about the *Star* and the poems they had just printed and how Hempfield would like them. And Nort, taking fire from the spontaneous combustion of his own ideas, began to talk as only Nort can talk. He painted a renewed country journalism in glowing language—a powerful engine of public opinion emanating from the country and expressing the mind, the heart, the very soul, of the people of the land. (Nort had never before in his life spent two

consecutive months in the country!) Great writers should contribute to its columns—yes, by George, great poets, too!—statesmen would consult its opinions, and its editor (and deep down inside Nort saw himself with incomparable vividness as that very editor), its editor would sway the destinies of the nation. As he talked he began to swing his arms, he increased his pace until he was a step or two ahead of Anthy, walking so quickly at times that she could scarcely keep up with him. Apparently he forgot that she was there—only he didn't quite. Apparently he was talking impersonally to the tree tops and the south wind and the stars—only he wasn't, really. When they came to the gate of Anthy's home, Nort walked straight past it and did not discover for a moment or two that Anthy had stopped.

When he came back Anthy was standing, a dim figure, in the gateway.

"Well," he said, "I've been doing all the talking——"

Anthy's low laugh sounded clear in the night air.

"Your picture of a reconstructed country newspaper is irresistible!"

"It could be done!" said Nort. "It could be done right here in Hempfield. Brains and energy will count anywhere, Miss Doane. Why, we could make the Hempfield *Star* one of the most quoted journals in America—or in the world!"

They stood silent for a moment there at the gate. Nort was not looking at Anthy, or thought he was not, but long afterward he had only to close his eyes, and the whole scene came back to him: the dim old house rising among its trees, the wide sky and the stars overhead, and the slight figure of Anthy there in the gateway. And the very odour and feel of the night——

Anthy was turning to walk up the pathway.

"One week more," said Nort.

"One week more," responded Anthy.

Now there is nothing either mystical or poetical about any one of these three words—one—week—more—or about all of them together, and yet Nort once repeated them for me as though they had some peculiar or esoteric significance. They merely meant that there was another week before Ed Smith returned. A week is enough for youth!

CHAPTER IX

A LETTER TO LINCOLN

REACHING this point in my narrative I lean back in my chair—the coals are dying down in the fireplace, Harriet long ago went to bed, and the house is silent with a silence that one can hear—I lean back and think again of that moment in Anthy's life.

I have before me an open letter, a letter so often opened and so often folded again that the creases are worn thin. I keep it in the drawer of my desk with a packet labelled, "Archives of the *Star*." There are several of the old Captain's editorials, including the one entitled "Fudge," and of course the one about Roosevelt, a number of Nort's early manu-

scripts, Fergus's version of Mark Twain, and five letters in Anthy's firm handwriting.

This is a very curious document, this letter I have before me. The outside of the envelope bears the name of Abraham Lincoln, and the letter itself begins: "Dear Mr. Lincoln." It is in Anthy's hand.

Ever since I began writing this narrative I have been impatient to reach this moment, but now that I am here, I hesitate. It is no common matter to put down the secret imaginings of a woman's soul.

We all lead double lives: that which our friends and neighbours know, and that which is invisible within us. Acquaintance gives us the outward aspects of our neighbours, with friendship we penetrate a little way into the deeper life, but when we love there is no glen too secret for us, no upland too elusive, and we worship at the altars of the eternal woods. Long before I knew Anthy well I knew something of her deeper life, something more than that which looked out of her still eyes or marked her quiet countenance. The quality of Anthy's silences were a sign: and I surprised once the look she had when walking alone in a country road. People who are

shallow, or whose inner lives are harassed by forms of fear ("most men," as Thoreau says, "live lives of quiet desperation") rarely care to be silent, rarely wish to be alone with themselves; but it is the sign of a noble nature that it has made terms with itself.

One of the tragedies of life, perhaps the supreme tragedy, is that we should be unable to follow those we love to their serenest heights. I once knew a man who had lived for twenty years with a woman, and never got beyond what he could see with the eyes of the flesh. The gate to the uplands of the soul long stood open to him (and stands open now no more); he passed that way, too, but he never went in. . . .

I do not wish to imply that Anthy was a mere dreamer. She was not, decidedly; but she had, always, her places of retirement. From a child she had friends of her own imagining. The first of them I have already referred to, a certain Richard and Rachel who came out through the wall near the stairway in her father's house, to be the confidants of a lonely child. Others came later as she grew older. I know the names of some of them, and just what they meant to Anthy

at particular moments in her life. They came to her, as friends come to us in real life, as we are ripe for them.

It was some time after her father's death, when she felt very much alone, that Anthy wrote her first letter to Mr. Lincoln. Her father had made Lincoln one of the most vivid characters of her girlhood: a portrait of him hung over the mantel in the living-room, and there was another at the office. One day, almost involuntarily, she began a letter:

DEAR MR. LINCOLN: I wish you were here. My father knew you well and trusted you more than he trusted any other man. He used to say that no other American who ever lived had such an understanding of the hearts of people as you had. I think you would understand some of the troubles I am now having with the *Star*, and that you would help me to be sensible and strong. When I was in college I thought I had begun to know something, but since I have come back here I feel like a very small girl again. I don't *know* enough to run the *Star*, and yet I cannot let it go——

Once started, she poured out her very heart to Mr. Lincoln: and having completed the letter she folded it, placed it in an envelope,

on which she wrote "Abraham Lincoln," and going to the mantel slipped it behind Mr. Lincoln's picture. Then she turned around quickly, looked all about—but there was no one there to see. She told me long afterward that it seemed at first a little absurd to be actually writing letters to Mr. Lincoln, but that it relieved her mind and made her feel more cheerful in her loneliness. After that it became an almost daily practice for her to pour out her thoughts and difficulties to Mr. Lincoln. And the place behind the portrait was the post office. She said that sometimes during the busiest parts of the day the thought would suddenly flash across her mind that she would tell Mr. Lincoln this or that, and it gave her a curious deep sense of comfort. Each evening she destroyed the letter she had written on the day before—destroyed them all, except those which lie here on my desk.

I am sure that this practice meant a great deal in Anthy's life. One cannot know much about any great human being, think what he would do under this or that circumstance, or what he would say if he were here, without coming to be something like him. We are

strangely influenced in this world by those whom we admire most. Harriet and I know a little old maid—I have written about her elsewhere—who has thought so much about the Carpenter of Nazareth that she has come to be wonderfully like Him.

It would be impossible for any one to understand Anthy, or, indeed, the life of the *Star*, or Nort, without knowing of the deep inner forces which were influencing her. I know now why she maintained through all the earlier days, those trying days, the front of quiet courage.

And so I come to the letter open here on my desk. It is the one that Anthy wrote on the night that Nort went home with her for the first time. It is not a long letter, and was evidently written hastily at the little table I have so often seen, at which I once sat quietly for a long time, where one may easily glance up at the portrait over the mantel. It is the first letter in which she ever referred at any great length to Nort. And this is the letter:

DEAR MR. LINCOLN: Well, we have had a wonderful day! We finished the setting of the poetry, of which I told you, early in the afternoon, but the last paper was not folded until after nine o'clock this evening.

She turned around quickly—but there was no one there to see

I am uncertain whether we have done wisely or not. My father would never have dreamed of anything so *different*, and Ed Smith will probably be horrified. We may have been too easily carried away by our irrepressible Vagabond, but if I had the decision to make again, I should do exactly what I have done. It's a sort of Declaration of Independence!

Our Vagabond came home with me this evening. Probably I should not have let him, but there's no harm done: he didn't know, most of the time, whether I was with him or he was alone. What a dreamer he is, anyway! We started talking about the *Star*, but no one heavenly body will long satisfy him. He soon soared away in the blue firmament, touched lightly upon a constellation or two, and was getting ready to settle the problems of the universe—when we arrived at the gate. I had some trouble to get him down to solid earth again. *He is no tramp printer*, of that I am certain. He has completely won over Uncle Newt, and his way with Fergus passeth understanding. Fergus trots around like a collie dog, rather cross, but faithful. David looks at him with that contemplative, humorous, philosophical expression he has, and isn't the least bit fooled. As for me, what *shall* I do with him and Ed Smith and Uncle Newt all in the office together! One can see that he has some fine qualities and impractical ideas—only he needs some one to take care of him and keep him out of mischief. He deserves the comment which Miss Bacon, our Latin professor, used to make in her dry way about some of the men who called on the girls at college: "Very interesting, very interesting, but very young."

What a spectacle he was when he came to us first! It is a pity that a man like that, so full of ideas and enthusiasm, should be so irresponsible! He has a very fine head and really wonderful eyes!

To-morrow promises to be an interesting day. I wonder what we shall hear from our poetry!

Your friend,

A. D.

I have always thought that Nort was a little abashed at the way in which he talked to Anthy on that first evening, though he never admitted it in so many words. And an incident occurred the next day that caused him to take a new attitude toward her. Up to this time he had treated her just like any other member of the staff, with easy, off-hand freedom. One of the visitors inquired:

"May I see the proprietor of the *Star?*"

Fergus replied: "Miss Doane will be here in a few minutes."

It struck Nort all in a heap. She *was* the proprietor, and, therefore, his employer. It gave him a curious, and rather unpleasant, twinge inside somewhere; yes, and it hurt a little, but wound up by being irresistibly funny. She was his "boss," this girl, she actually paid him his wages. She could discharge him,

too, by George! He stopped suddenly and went off into a wild shout of laughter. Fergus took his pipe out of his mouth, held it a moment while he looked Nort over, and then, slowly nodding his head but saying never a word, put it back again.

Now, if there was anything in this world that irked the Nort of those days it was the feeling of restraint, of being reined in. All that day, in spite of varied excitements which followed the publication of the poetry, Nort was overcome from time to time by the thought of Anthy as his "boss," and, in spite of all he could do, there were other feelings, curious, inexplicable feelings, mingled with the amusement he felt.

It was inevitable that Nort should somehow act upon the impulse of this new thought. His eager mind played with it, suggesting a thousand amusing plans. Here was a situation that had possibilities.

In the middle of the afternoon Nort suddenly pretended to be out of a job, and walking up to Anthy's desk he stood up very straight and stiff, and pulling at a lock of hair over his forehead, said very respectfully:

"What shall I do next, miss?"

Anthy glanced up at him. It rather offended his vanity that she seemed so surprised to see him there. Evidently he was very far from her thoughts. His face was as sober and as blank as the face of nature, but Anthy saw the spark in his eyes—and the challenge —though she did not know exactly what he meant.

He pulled his forelock again, and in a voice still more subdued and respectful, repeated:

"What shall I do next, miss?"

There was a slightly higher colour in Anthy's face, but she looked squarely into his eyes and said quietly:

"You'd better help Fergus clean up the press."

I shall never forget the look of puzzled wonder and chagrin in Nort's face as he turned away. Anthy went back to her work with apparent unconcern.

CHAPTER X

THE WONDERFUL DAY

THOUGH I live to be a hundred and fifty years old, which heaven forbid, I shall never forget the events which followed upon the historic publication of the Poems of Hempfield. I wonder if you have ever awakened in the morning with a curious deep sense of having some peculiar reason for being happy? You lie half awake for a moment wondering what it can all be about, and then it comes suddenly and vividly alive for you. It was so with me on that morning, and I thought of the adventures of the printing-office, and of

Anthy and Nort and Fergus and the old Captain.

"Surely," I said to myself, "no one ever had such friends as I have!"

I thought what an amusing world this was, anyway, how full of captivating people. And I whistled all the way down the stairs, clean forgetting that this was contrary to one of Harriet's most stringent rules; and when I went out it seemed to me that the country-side never looked more beautiful at dawn than it did on that morning.

At Barton's Crossing on my way to town I could see the silvery spire of the Congregational Church, and at the hill beyond the bridge all Hempfield lay before me, half hidden in trees, with friendly puffs of breakfast smoke rising from many chimneys; and when I reached the gate of the printing-office the sun was just looking around the corner, and there in the doorway, as fresh and confident as you please, stood that rascal of a Norton Carr, whistling a little tune and looking out with a cocky eye upon the world of Hempfield.

"Hello, David!" he called out when he saw me.

"Hello, Nort!" I responded; "it's a wonderful morning."

He took a quick step forward and clapped me on the shoulder as I came up.

"Exactly what I've been thinking," he said eagerly, "and it's going to be a wonderful day."

If ever youth and joy-of-life spoke in a human voice, they spoke that morning in Nort's. I cannot convey the sudden sense it gave me of the roseate illusion of adventure. It *was* going to be a wonderful day!

I think Nort confidently expected to see a long line of people gathering in front of the office that morning clamouring to buy extra copies of the *Star*.

He had been so positive that the appearance of the poetry would stir Hempfield to its depths that he had urged the publication of a large extra edition. But the Captain assured him that the only thing that ever really produced an extra sale of the *Star* was a "big obituary." In its palmy days, when the Captain let himself go, and the deceased was really worthy of the Captain's facile and flowery pen, the *Star* had sold as many as two hundred extra papers. It was as much a

part of any properly conducted funeral in Hempfield to buy copies of the Captain's obituaries—the same issue also containing the advertised thanks of the family to the friends who had been with them in their sore bereavement—as it was for the choir to sing "Lead, Kindly Light."

Fergus, especially, jeered at the proposal of an extra edition. It was not the money loss that disturbed Fergus, for that would be next to nothing at all, it was the thought of being stampeded by Nort's enthusiasm, and afterward hearing the sarcastic comments of Ed Smith. While this heated controversy was going on, Anthy quietly ordered the paper—and we printed the extra copies.

All that morning I saw Nort glancing from time to time out of the window. No line appeared. Nine o'clock—and no line—not even one visitor! Nort fidgeted around the press, emptied the wastebasket, looked at his watch. Ten o'clock——

Steps on the porch—soft, hesitating steps. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Nort stiffen up and his face begin to glow. A little barefooted boy edged his way in at the door. We all looked around at him. I confess that

Nort was not the only one who was expectant. When you have fired a big gun you want to know that the shot hit somewhere! The boy was evidently embarrassed by the battery of eyes levelled at him.

"Sister wants two papers," said he finally. "She says, the papers with the po'try."

I shall never forget the sight of Nort, head in air, marching over to the pile of extras, grandly handing two of them to our customer, and then walking triumphantly across the room and delivering the dime to Anthy.

"Who was that now?" asked Nort, when the little chap went out.

"That," said Anthy, "was Sophia Rineheart's brother."

Nort clapped his hand dramatically to his head.

"The false Sophia!" he exclaimed; "I expected that Sophia would want at least fifty copies of the journal which has made her famous."

The next incident was even more disquieting. An old man named Johnson came to put a twenty-cent advertisement in the paper —"Ten Cords of Wood for Sale"—and it appeared, after an adroit question by Nort.

that, although he had received that week's paper, he did not even know that we had published the Poems of Hempfield.

Nort's spirits began to drop, as his face plainly showed. Like many young men who start out to set the world afire, he was finding the kindling wood rather damp. Just before noon, however, answering a telephone call, we saw his eyes brighten perceptibly.

"Thank you," he was saying. "Ten, did you say? All right, you shall have them. Glad you called early before they are all gone."

He put down the receiver, smiling broadly.

"There," he said, "it's started!"

"Humph," grunted Fergus, and Anthy, leaning back on her stool, laughed merrily.

But Nort refused to be further depressed. If things did not happen of themselves in Hempfield, why he was there to make them happen. When he went out at noon he began asking everybody he met, at the hotel, at the post office, at the livery stable, whether they had seen the *Star* that week. Nort had then been in Hempfield about four months, and the town had begun to enjoy him—rather nervously, because it was never quite certain

what he would do next. In Hempfield almost everybody was working for the approval of everybody else, which no one ever attains; while Nort never seemed to care whether anybody approved him or not.

"Seen the *Star* this week?" he asked Joe Crane, the liveryman, apparently controlling his excitement with difficulty.

"No," says Joe. "Why?"

"It's the biggest issue we ever had. We are printing the poems of all the poets of Hempfield."

Joe paused to consider a moment, while Nort looked at him earnestly.

"Didn't know they was any poets in Hempfield," observed Joe finally.

"Why," says Nort, "Hempfield has more poets than any town of its size in America."

Now, Joe took the *Star* as a matter of course, and advertised in it, too:

JOSEPH CRANE
LIVERY, FEED AND SALE STABLE

but, rarely expecting to find anything in the paper but the local news, which he knew already, he had unfortunately used the Poems of Hempfield for cleaning harness.

After Nort's exciting visit he crossed over and borrowed a somewhat sticky copy which Nathan Collins, the baker, was saving to wrap bread in, and glancing over the Poems of Hempfield, discovered that Addison Bird of Hawleyville had written one of them, a poem entitled "Just Plant One Tree, Boys," which he had once read at the Grange.

Joe bought hay of Ad, and the idea that Ad was a poet struck Joe as being an irresistible piece of humour. He told everybody who came in during the day, and even called Ad on the telephone to joke him about it. Ad had not heard of it yet, and immediately hitched up and drove into town, not knowing whether to be pleased or angry. He met Nort at the gate of the printing-office, and was received by that young editor with a warm handshake and congratulations upon appearing in what was undoubtedly the most interesting issue of a newspaper ever published in Westmoreland County. The upshot of it was that Ad paid up his long delinquent subscription, and went away with quite a bundle of extra copies.

It is a strange thing in this world how few people recognize a thing as wonderful or beau-

tiful until some poet or prophet comes along to tell them that it is wonderful or beautiful.

"Behold that sunset!" cries the poet, quite beside himself with excitement, and the world, which has been accustomed to having sunsets every evening for supper, and thinks nothing of them, suddenly looks up and discovers unknown splendours.

"Behold the *Star*," cried Nort, rushing wildly about Hempfield. "See what we've got in the *Star*"—and it spread through the town that something unusual, wonderful, was happening in the hitherto humdrum office in the little old building back from the street.

People did not know quite what to make of the publication of the poetry, it was so unprecedented, and the result was that we soon found the whole town discussing the *Star*. The interest cropped up in the most unexpected places, and developed a number of very amusing incidents. We had lifted a little new corner of the veil of life in Hempfield, and we had Nort to tell us how wonderful and amusing it was. Not everybody liked it—for life, everywhere and always, arouses opposition as well as approval—and one man even came in to cancel his subscription be-

cause he thought he found unfavourable references to himself in one of the poems; but, on the whole, people were interested and amused.

With all his enthusiasm, Nort got no more satisfaction out of the events of the week than the old Captain. On Saturday afternoons, when the farmers came to town, the Captain loved to stroll up the street in a leisurely way, pass a word here and there with his neighbours, and generally enjoy himself. I always loved to see him on such occasions—his fine old face, his long rusty coat, the cane which was at once the sceptre of his dominion and the support of his age.

Upon this particular afternoon he had the consciousness of having written a truly scorching editorial on William J. Bryan, as trenchant a thing—the Captain loved "trechant"—as ever he wrote in his life, and when people began to speak to him about that week's issue of the *Star*, it pleased him greatly. It *was* a great issue!

Mr. Tole, the druggist, for example, who was secretly much gratified with the publication of his favourite poem, which he shrewdly considered excellent free advertising, remarked:

"Had a great paper this week, Cap'n."

The old Captain responded with dignity:

"The *Star*, Mr. Tole, is looking up."

How sweet was all this to the old Captain. For so long the current had been setting against him, there had been so little of the feeling of success and power, which he loved. We could distinguish the triumphant notes in the Captain's voice when he returned to the office. He sat down in the editorial chair with a special air of confidence.

"Anthy," he said, clearing his throat.

"Yes, Uncle Newt."

"Anthy, I have hopes of Hempfield. Even in these days, when the people seem to be going off after false gods, the truth will prevail."

He paused.

"We are beginning to hear from our editorial on William J. Bryan."

I recall yet Anthy's laugh—the amusement of it, and yet the deep sympathy.

The Captain's eye fell upon Nort. He looked him over affectionately.

"Nort, my boy," he said, "we're printing a newspaper."

"We are, Cap'n," responded Nort heartily, but with a glint in his eyes.

I saw the swift, grateful look that Anthy gave him.

But the old Captain's mood suddenly changed. It is in the time of triumph that we sometimes find our sorrows most poignant. He began to shake his big shaggy head.

"Ah, Nort," said he, "one thing only takes the heart out of me."

"What's that, Cap'n?" asked Nort, though we all knew well enough.

"If only the Colonel had not left us, I could put my very soul into the work. I could write wonderful editorials, Nort."

If there was one subject besides flying machines and Democrats—and possibly woman suffrage—upon which the old Captain was irreconcilable, it was Colonel Roosevelt. He had never followed or loved any leader since Lincoln as he had followed and loved Roosevelt, and when the Colonel "went astray," as he expressed it, it affected him like some great personal sorrow. It went so deep with him that he had never yet been able to write an editorial upon the subject. "Why," he had said to Anthy, "I loved him like a brother!"

"Never mind, Cap'n," said Nort. "Some

of these days you'll tell us what you think about the Colonel."

The Captain shook his head sadly.

"No, Nort," said he, "it goes too deep, it goes too deep."

With that he turned to his desk with a heavy sigh and began opening the week's exchanges, and we knew that he would soon fall upon Brother Kendrick of the Sterling *Democrat* and smite him hip and thigh. If the Colonel were no longer with him, still his head was bloody but unbowed—and he would fight on to the end. But the seed dropped by Nort—"You'll tell us what you think about the Colonel some of these days"—did not fall on wholly barren soil. It produced, indeed, a growth of such luxuriance—but of all that, in its proper place.

Well, we disposed of every extra copy of the paper we had printed, and actually had to run off some reprints and slips containing the Poems of Hempfield, of which we also sold quite a number.

How we all need just a little success! To the editors of a country newspaper, who publish week after week for months without so much as a ripple of response, all this was

most exciting and interesting—yes, intoxicating.

Considered as a business venture, of course, or measured in exact financial returns, it may seem small enough. Indeed, Ed Smith said—— But can we ever measure the best things in life by their financial returns? Considered as a human experience, a fresh and charming adventure in life, it glows yet in my memory with a glory all its own.

The effect upon Nort was curious enough. At one moment the amusing aspects of the adventure seemed uppermost with him, and I felt that he was laughing at all of us, using us all, using the town of Hempfield, for his lordship's amusement; and at the next moment he seemed seriously entangled in the meshes of his own enthusiasm. It was a time of transition and development for Nort.

Part of his reckless spirits at this time I am sure was due to the passage of arms with Anthy, which I have already described. He had been curiously piqued by her attitude, and by the thought that she was actually his employer and could discharge him. It did not correspond with his preconceived views of life nor with his conception of the place that

women should occupy in the cosmos. Not that Nort had ever been profoundly interested in women, not he! He had played with them, indeed, for he had belonged to that class, sometimes called the favoured, in which men rarely work with women, or study with them, or think with them. While he did not try to explain his emotions to himself, he had been disconcerted by Anthy's perfectly direct ways, by being treated simply as a human being, a coworker, not as though he were all man and she all woman, and nothing else mattered.

It was in this mood of exuberant amusement, combined with challenge to Anthy, that he wrote his absurd report (which was never printed) of the effect of the publication of the poems upon Hempfield, and read it aloud one evening with great dramatic effect—keeping one eye on Anthy where she sat, half in shadow, at her desk.

"Poets," wrote Nort, "were seen congratulating or commiserating one another upon the public streets, whole families were electrified by discovering that they had a poet in their midst without knowing it, wives were revealed to husbands and husbands to wives, and even

the little children of Hempfield began to lisp in measures."

There was much more in the same strain, indicating that Nort was still laughing at us, instead of with us. But Anthy sat there in the shadow, very still, and said nothing. When in repose Anthy's face seemed often to take on a cast of sadness, especially about the eyes, of that sadness and sweetness which so often go with strength and nobility of spirit. She was very beautiful that night, I thought.

I did not know as well then as I came to know afterward, what a struggle she was facing to save the *Star*, what she had sacrificed to keep green the memory of her father and to cherish the old Captain. And she had a love for Hempfield and Hempfield folk that Nort could not have guessed. Life might be a huge joke to Nort, who had never, up to this time, in all his life, had to fight or suffer for anything—but Anthy, Anthy was already meeting the great adventure.

But there was another and a deeper Nort, which few people at that time had ever seen. This was the Nort who had fled impulsively from New York, and this was the Nort who

now strode out along the country roads toward Hawleyville, his head hot with great thoughts. This was the Nort who was tasting the sweets of editorship, who had more than half begun to believe what he had told Anthy, on the spur of the moment, when he walked home with her. Why not a wonderful new country journalism? Why not a paper right in Hempfield which, by virtue of its profound thought, its matchless wit, its charming humour, its saving sympathy, its superb handling of great topics, its—its—— Why not? And why not Norton Carr, editor?

"Matchless" was the adjective that Nort had in his mind at the moment, and he imagined a typical comment in the New York *Times:*

"We quote this week from the Hempfield *Star*, that matchless exponent of rural thought in America, edited by Mr. Norton Carr——" etc., etc.

This would naturally be copied in the *Literary Digest* and made the subject of an editorial in *Life*.

This was the Nort who walked the country roads, neither seeing the stars above nor feeling the clods beneath, but living in a fairer

land than this is, the perfect spring weather of the soul of youth. It was thus that Nort lived his deeper life, as the hero of his own hot imaginings.

And this, too, was the Nort who returned to Hempfield—without any conscious intention on his part, for how can one think of two things at once—by the road which led past Anthy's home. He did not stop, he scarcely looked around, and yet he had an intense and vivid undersense of a dim light in one of the upper windows of the dark house.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH GREAT PLANS ARE EVOLVED, AND THERE IS A SURPRISING EVENT

SINCE we had come to know the *Star*, Sunday afternoons were important occasions for Harriet and me. Nort was the first to visit us—soon after he came to Hempfield—but the old Captain and Anthy were not many Sundays behind him. They usually drove out with one of Joe Crane's horses (charged against advertising in the *Star*), and on such occasions the Captain was very grand in his long coat and wide hat—and gloves. He always greeted Harriet with chiv-

alrous formality, inquired after her health, and usually had some bit of old-fashioned gallantry to offer her, which always bothered her just a little, especially if she happened at the moment to catch my eye. I had great trouble getting Fergus to come at all; but having once lured him out, Harriet's gingerbread soon finished him.

At first there was an amusing struggle between Harriet and Fergus, in which, of course, that Scotchman came off second best —and never knew that he was beaten! You see, Fergus is never entirely happy unless he can tip back in his chair, until you are certain he is going over backward and smash the door of the china closet. Also, he smokes the worst tobacco in the world. On the occasion of his second visit he went prowling around the room for a straight-back chair to sit in, but Harriet shooed him irresistibly toward an effeminate rocker, where he could gratify his instinct for tipping back, and not endanger the family china.

During the week that followed Harriet made a scientific study of the drafts in our living-room (that is, I think she did), and on the next Sunday she not only shooed

Fergus into a rocker, but that rocker was so placed near the window that the tobacco smoke was drawn straight out of the room. After that, she made Fergus so comfortable within and without—especially within—that he thought her a very wonderful woman. As she is.

As for Harriet and me, these Sunday gatherings—which often included the Scotch preacher, or our neighbour Horace, or, rarely, the Starkweathers—these visits were delightful beyond comparison. By Saturday night there was not a speck of dust in the house that was visible to the naked eye, and by three o'clock Sunday (if there was no one in to dinner) Harriet and I began an unacknowledged contest to see which of us would be the first to catch sight of the visitors coming up the town road or across the fields. We both pretended we weren't looking—but we were.

It was on the Sunday afternoon following the publication of the poetry, just after I had come in from the barn, that I saw Nort coming down the lane which skirts the edge of the wood. He had a stick in his hand with which he struck at the foliage of the hazel brush or decapitated a milkweed.

"There's Nort!" I exclaimed.

It was miraculous to see Harriet twitch off her apron and, with two or three deft pats, arrange her hair.

When Nort saw us, for we couldn't help going outside to meet him, he raised one hand, shouting:

"Hello, there, David!"

I remember thinking what a boy he looked. Not large, not very strong, but with a lithe swinging step and an odd tilt of the head, a little backward, as though he were looking up for the joy of it. I felt my heart rising and warming at the very sight of him.

"Well, Miss Grayson," said he, coming up the steps, "have you decided yet whether you and David are most indebted to the MacIntoshes or the Scribners?"

There was laughter in his eyes as he shook Harriet's hand, and I could see the faint flush in her cheeks and the little positive nod of the head she had when she was most pleased, and didn't want it to appear too plainly. Nort had long ago discovered her undying passion for her ancestors, and already knew the complete record of that MacIntosh who was an officer in the Colonial army, and who,

if one were to judge by Harriet's account, was the origin of all the good traits of the Grayson family.

When Harriet is especially pleased with any one, particularly if he is a man, she thinks at once that he must be hungry; and no sooner were the greetings well over than she escaped to the kitchen.

Nort at once put on a portentous look of solemn concern, his face changing so quickly that it was almost comical.

"David," said he, "here we are right up to another issue, and no ideas."

He spoke as though he were the sole proprietor of the *Star*.

"Well," I said, "a little thing like that never yet prevented a newspaper from appearing regularly."

"No," he laughed, "but think of the perfectly grand opportunity that is going to waste. Ed Smith away for another week!"

"We enjoyed printing the poetry, didn't we?"

"Didn't we!" he responded. "I thought last Wednesday night that it was pretty nearly the biggest and most interesting work in the world to edit a country newspaper."

"And you told Anthy."

He glanced around at me quickly.

"She told you?"

"No," I said, "but I knew."

"Yes, I told her," he said.

He paused and looked off across our quiet hills; the autumn air was cool and sweet.

"I wonder——" he began, but he did not tell me what it was that he wondered.

Presently his thoughts returned sharply to the *Star*.

"What would you put in the paper, anyhow, David?" he asked.

"Hempfield," said I.

His eyes kindled.

"I get you," he said eagerly. "It's exactly what I say. The very spirit of the town, the soul of the country—make the paper fairly throb with it."

He was off! It was the first time I had seen Nort in his serious mood—and he could be dreadfully serious, as serious as only youth knows how to be.

"Truth!" he exclaimed fiercely. "We don't print the truth in the *Star*. The most interesting and important things about Hempfield never get into the paper at all. I tell you,

David, we never even touch the actual facts about Hempfield. We just fiddle around the outsides of things: 'John Smith came to town on Saturday with his blooded colt. Fine colt, John!' Bah! Think of it—when there is a whole world of real events to write about. Why, David, there are more wonderful and tragic and amusing things right here in this small town than ever I saw in all my life. When we printed the poems last week, we just scratched the surface of the real life of Hempfield."

Nort had jumped up, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and was tramping up and down the room, shaking his mane like a young lion. I confess that, for a moment, I was tempted to laugh at him—and then suddenly I did not care at all to laugh. Something in the wild youth of him, the bold thoughts, stirred me to the depths. The magic of youth, waving its flag upon the Hill Formidable! The fresh runner catching up the torch that has fallen from the slack hand of age! I have had my dreams, too, Nort. I dreamed once——

I dreamed once of seeing the very truth of things. As I worked alone here in my

fields, with the great world all open and beautiful around me, I said to myself, "I will be simple, I will not dodge or prevaricate or excuse; I will see the whole of life." I confess now with some sadness (and humour, too) that I have not mastered the wonders of this earth, nor seen the truth of it. . . . I heard a catbird singing in the bush, a friend stopped me by the roadside, there was a star in the far heavens—— And when I looked up I was old, and Truth was vanishing behind the hill.

Something of all this I had in my thoughts as Nort talked to me; and it came to me, wistfully, that perhaps this burning youth might really have in him the genius to see the truth of things more clearly than I could, and tell it better than I could.

"Yes," I said, "if one could only see this Hempfield of ours as it really is, all the poetry of it, all the passion of it, all the dullness and mediocrity, all the tragedy of failure, all that is in the hearts and souls of these common people—what a thing it would be! How it would stir the world!"

I must have said it with my whole soul, as I felt it. I suppose I should not have added

fuel to the fire of that youth, I suppose I should have been calm and old and practical.

For a moment Nort sat perfectly silent. Then I felt the trembling, eager pressure of his hand on my arm. He leaned over toward me.

"David," he said, "you understand things."

There was that in his voice that I had never heard before. Usually he had a half-humorous, yes, flippant, way with him, but there was something here that touched bottom.

I don't know quite why it is, but after I have been serious about so long, I have an irresistible desire to laugh. I find I can't remain in a rarified atmosphere too long.

"Nort," I said suddenly, "you haven't been seeing any terrible truths about Hempfield, have you?"

The change in his face was startling. He looked like a boy caught in the jam closet—the colour suddenly flooding his cheeks.

"Where is it?" I asked. "Trot it out."

"How did you know?" asked that extraordinary young man.

I laughed.

"Nort," I said, "you aren't the only man

in this world who is trying to write—and is ashamed of himself because he can't."

With a smile which I can only characterize as sheepish, Nort drew from his breast pocket a packet of paper. He was all eagerness again, and was for reading me his production on the spot; but just at this moment we saw the old Captain driving up to the gate alone. Where was Anthy? A little later Fergus came, and for some time Harriet filled the whole house with the pleasant noises and bustle of hospitality, which she knows best how to do.

"Captain," I said as soon as ever I could get in a word, "Nort has brought a manuscript with him to read to us."

At that the Captain instinctively lifted one hand to his breast.

"The Captain has one, too," I said.

"A mere editorial," responded the Captain with dignity.

"Where's yours, Fergus?" I asked.

Fergus took his pipe out, barked once or twice deep down inside, and put it back again, which, interpreted, meant that Fergus was amused.

At this point Harriet broke in.

"Before you do anything else," said she, "I want you all to come out and have a bite to eat."

That's the way with Harriet. Just at the moment when you've set your scenery, staged your play, and the curtain is about to go up, she appears with—gingerbread—and stampedes the entire company. Why, you couldn't have kept Fergus——

Harriet had put on her choicest tablecloth and the precious napkins left her by our great-aunt Dorcas, and the old thin glass dishes that came from Grandmother Scribner, which are never used except upon high occasions. It was Sunday night and, as Harriet explained, we never have any supper on Sunday night. There was thick yellow gingerbread, with just a hint in it (not a bit too much and not too little) of the delectable molasses of which it was made, and perfect apple sauce from the earliest Red Astrakhans, cooked so that the rosy quarters looked plump, with sugary crystals sparkling upon them, and thin glass tumblers (of Grandmother Scribner's set) full of sweet milk, yellow and almost foamy at the top.

There are perfect moments in this life!

Nort was in the wildest spirits, the rebound from his unusual mood of seriousness. Nothing escaped him—neither the napkins, nor the spoons, nor the thin old glass, nor the perfect gingerbread, nor the marvellous apple sauce, nor the glow in Harriet's face. She knew that Nort would see it all! Harriet is never so beautiful as when she sits at the head of her own table, her moment of supreme artistry.

"I went to church to-day," said Nort finally.

"You did!" Harriet was vastly pleased.

"Yes," smiled Nort.

This was truly a youth after her own heart.

"Nothing else to do on Sunday in Hempfield," said Nort; "and it was interesting."

He stopped and looked slowly around at me.

"The truth about the church in Hempfield, David!" he exclaimed, as though we had a secret between us.

I laughed.

"That's one thing," I said, "you can't easily tell the truth about—in Hempfield."

"Why not?" asked Harriet with astonishment. "Is there anything that should encourage one to truth-telling more than the church?"

"Read it, Nort," said I, "read it."

"Well," said Nort, again drawing forth his manuscript, "you know what the ordinary church report in the *Star* is like. 'The usual services were held last Sunday morning at the Congregational Church. An appreciative audience listened to an eloquent sermon by the Rev. Mr. Sargent, his text being John x, 3.' Now, I ask you if that gives you any picture of what the meeting was like? Everybody who was there knew that Mr. Sargent preached, and nobody who was absent could get anything out of such a report. So what's the use of printing it? I thought I'd write a true report of what I saw—and I'll bet it will be read in Hempfield."

The old live gleam was in Nort's eyes.

Here on my desk I have the very manuscript from which Nort read, and I give it just as it was written, as a documentary evidence of Nort's life.

The usual forenoon service was held in the Congregational Church on Sunday. Being a hot day, the Rev. Mr. Sargent wore his black alpaca coat, and preached earnestly for thirty minutes, his text being John x, 3. Miss Daisy Miller played a selection from Mozart, though the piano was unfortunately out of tune. There were in attendance fifteen women, mostly old, seven

men, and four children, besides the choir. During the sermon old Mr. Johnson went to sleep and Mrs. Johnson ate four peppermints. Deacon Mitchell took up a collection of fifty-six cents, besides what was in the envelopes. Following is a complete list of those in attendance:

—and Nort solemnly read off the names.

I wish I could describe the hush which followed Nort's reading, and the horror in Harriet's face. Fergus was the first to break the tension. He seemed to be slowly strangling, and his face contrived to twist itself into the most alarming contortions. The old Captain finally observed indulgently:

"Nort will have his little joke."

"Joke!" exclaimed Nort. "Isn't every word of it true? I leave it to Miss Grayson if I haven't been absolutely accurate. And I could have said a lot more about the service that would have been equally true—and a great deal funnier."

I could see generations of Puritan ancestors marshalling themselves for the fray in Harriet's horrified countenance. I could scarcely keep from laughing.

"Yes," I began, "every word is true——"

"The piano tuner," broke in Harriet, "couldn't come last week."

"But, Nort," I continued; "you may have seen the church in Hempfield, but have you felt it?"

"Even if old Mrs. Johnson *does* eat peppermints——" Harriet was saying.

"Then you wouldn't put the truth in the *Star?*" said Nort.

I was about to reply, when the old Captain raised a commanding hand.

"The trouble is," said he with great deliberation, "that we *do* print the truth in the *Star;* but this new generation, fed upon luxury and ease, has lost its desire for the truth. We're preaching the same sound doctrine that we've preached for thirty years—but the people refuse the truth. They say to us, 'Prophesy not unto us right things. Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.' They are wandering in the wilderness. They have made unto themselves a graven image of free trade, and they are falling down and worshipping before the profane altar of what they are pleased to call the Rights of Women. Rights of Women!"

Whenever the old Captain grew most eloquent he always waxed Biblical.

Here Nort broke in again:

"Well, if you don't like that report—I wrote it more than half in fun anyway—here's another. It's the truth—I felt it, too, David—and I haven't used a single name!"

I can see him yet, sitting up there behind the table, quite rigid, reading from his manuscript:

"There is a man in this town who quarrels regularly with his wife. He quarrelled with her this morning at breakfast: said the eggs were overdone and the coffee was cold. The sun was shining in at the window, the birds were singing, and the grass was green—but he was quarrelling with his wife——"

Well, Nort had a breathless audience! This time he was in deadly earnest. His sketch was not long, but it was as vivid a picture of the torment of domestic unhappiness as ever I have seen in such brief compass. Moreover, it had the very passion, the cut and thrust of the truth of things.

No sooner had he finished reading than Harriet leaned forward and asked in a half whisper, all ablaze with shocked interest.

"Who is it? Is it the Newtons?"

It was Nort's turn to look surprised.

"Why, no," said he. "I don't know the Newtons at all."

"But you must have had some one in mind."

"No," said Nort; "it's just a description of how married people quarrel."

"But it's exactly what the Newtons do," said Harriet.

Here the old Captain broke in.

"Why," said he, "if we printed a thing like that we'd lose all the advertising of Newton's store. We'd lose the whole Newton family, and their cousins, the Maxwells, and *their* connections, the Mecklins. Why——"

"But it's true, it's true!" Nort burst in. "And every one of you was more interested in it, I could see that, than in anything we ever put in the *Star*—since I've been here."

With that Nort suddenly jumped up, as though some important thought had just occurred to him, and rushed out of the room.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Harriet.

I succeeded in catching him in the hallway.

"Hempfield would not see these things as Miss Grayson does," he said.

"Nort," said I, "Harriet *is* Hempfield."

He paused just a moment.

"I think Anthy—Miss Doane—will understand," he said.

With that he rushed out in the dark. He made the distance to town, I think, in record time. It was well past nine o'clock when he arrived at the common, and the town was silent with a silence that broods over it only on Sunday nights. He went past the printing-office without looking around. It was in the neighbourhood of a quarter to ten when he arrived at Anthy's gate. An odd time for a call at Hempfield, you say! It was, indeed.

But there was a light in the window. Nort went up the steps and rang the bell. He had never before felt quite as he did at that moment.

Anthy herself opened the door. Nort stepped in quickly and, for a moment, was unable to say a word. Anthy retreated a step or two.

"I tell you, Miss Doane," said Nort explosively, "the only way to make a success of the *Star* is to publish the truth about Hempfield——"

At that moment Nort happened to glance through the wide door of the library. It was a comfortable, old-fashioned room, and the

"I tell you, Miss Doane," said Nort explosively, "the only way to make a success of the *Star* is to publish the truth about Hempfield——"

evening being a little cool a cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth. In a low chair under the light, seeming perfectly at home, sat Ed Smith.

The words died on Nort's lips. He stood for a moment rigid and silent, facing Anthy. Ed had turned his head and was looking at them. No one uttered a sound.

Nort was never able afterward to account for what he did at that moment. He turned quickly, still without saying a word, rushed out of the house, ran down the steps, fell over a honeysuckle bush, picked himself up again, bumped into the gate—and found himself in the middle of the road, in the dark, bare-headed.

CHAPTER XII

THE EXPLOSION

WHEN I was younger than I am now—not so very long ago, either—I thought I should like to make over some of my neighbours. I thought I could improve on the processes of the Creator, who was apparently wobbly in his moral standards and weak in his discipline, for he allowed several people I knew to flourish and be joyful who by good rights ought to be smacked on their refractory pates; but now, it seems to me, I love most of all to see my friends coming every day true to themselves: Harriet illustrating herself, Horace himself. As for the old Captain, I

never wanted a hair of him changed. When men act in character, though they be beggars or burglars, and do not pose or imitate, we have a kind of fondness for them.

As I look back on it now I would not even make over Ed Smith. I did not understand him as well then as I do now, but he was playing his part in the world as well as ever he knew how to play it.

Sometimes I like to think of human beings as cells in the various parts of the huge anatomy of society. In any such consideration Ed Smith would be a stomach cell, and a pretty good one. Whenever the rest of us were soaring too far aloft it was Ed's function to come stealing in upon us like the honest odour of corned beef and cabbage. It was Ed's function to see that we earned every week at least as much as we spent, a tremendous undertaking when you come to think of it.

The fact is, whether we like it or not, we are all mixed up together in this world—poets and plumbers, critics and cooks—and the more clearly we recognize it, the firmer, sounder, truer, will be our grip upon the significance of human life. Why, many a time, when I've been sitting here reading in

my study, living for the moment in the rarer atmosphere of the poets, the philosophers, the prophets, I have had to get up and go out and feed the pigs. I have always thought it, somehow, good for me.

When Ed Smith arrived at the printing-office early on the following morning, the fat, round stove, with legs broadly planted in a box of sand, into which Fergus had poked accumulated scraps and cuttings of the shop, had just broken into a jolly smile. Fergus himself, his early morning temper scarcely less rumpled than his hair, was standing near it, shoulders humped up, like a cold crow. He did not know that Ed Smith had returned to Hempfield, but his face, when he saw him, betrayed not the slightest sign of surprise.

Ed was evidently labouring under a considerable pressure of excitement.

"What's all this tomfoolery about printing the truth in the *Star?*" he burst out.

Fergus began to rumble.

"Tired o' printin' lies, I s'pose," he observed.

Ed always wore his hat a little cocked back, and when he was excited he put both

hands in his pockets and began thrusting out his chest until you were relieved to discover that he was held together by a chain which ran across him from the vest pocket that contained his watch to the pocket where he carried his comb and his toothbrush.

Ed had been working himself up into a fine passion. Only ten days away and everything gone to the bow-wows. The Poems of Hempfield! He held up the first page of our precious issue, slapped it smooth with his hand, and glared at it fiercely.

"The Poems of Hempfield!" he remarked with concentrated irony. "What this broken-down newspaper has got to learn is that it isn't in business for the fun of it. Poetry! Truth! What we want is cash, hard, cold cash!"

At this moment Ed began to glare at the paper still more fiercely.

"Where's that reading notice about the electric light company?" he demanded.

By an imperceptible motion of a hostile shoulder Fergus indicated the hold-over stone. Ed rushed over and found the precious item, with leads askew and one corner pied down. He also found the notice of the candidacy of D. J. McCullum, Democrat, which the old

Captain had so lightly ordered excluded from our issue of the *Star*.

If Anthy herself had appeared at that moment I don't know what might not have happened. Poor Ed! He had painfully, by hustle and bustle, pieced together a business which was about to yield a profit, and had scarcely turned his back when a lot of blunderers (and worse) had begun to mix everything up. There wasn't enough business sense in the whole crowd of them——

Ed had still another cause for irritation. He was miserably jealous, and for the first time in his life. The incident of the previous night, when Nort had burst in so unceremoniously upon Anthy, and at sight of him had fled so precipitately, was wholly beyond his comprehension. A tramp printer, at next to nothing a week! What could he mean by calling on Anthy, the proprietor, in such a way, and bursting out with a suggestion about the paper, as though he owned it.

Poor Ed! I shall never forget the picture I have of him—I learned about it long afterward—standing rather stiffly at the doorway, awkwardly handling his hat, about to say good-night, and yet not going.

"Anthy," he began, "I came back on purpose to—to make a proposition to you to-night——"

He published his intention by the very sound of his voice, which trembled a little in spite of the confidence he had felt beforehand.

I fancy I can see Anthy, too, as she stood facing him there at the foot of the stairs in the old hallway, with the flower-filled urns on the wall paper. So much of the thing in her eyes as she looked at him whimsically, it must have been, and yet kindly, Ed could never have understood. He could never have understood the other Anthy, the Anthy whose letters to Mr. Lincoln lie here in my desk.

I am not clear as to exactly what happened next, and no more, I think, was Ed; but he went out and down the steps without having told Anthy what his "proposition" was, and firmly believing that she did not know how dangerously near he had come to committing himself. Women know how to do these things. Ed did not rush away as Nort had done, nor fall over the honeysuckle bush, nor lose his hat—nor his head. Not Ed! But as he walked back home a faint suspicion began to

rankle in his soul that his course might not be as clear as he had supposed.

The most irresistible man to women is the one who seems to know least that they are women at all. But Ed Smith was not of this sort. Ed's practical thoughts were ever hanging about the idea of marriage. He fell more or less deeply in love with every pretty girl he met, made elaborately gallant speeches, brought her flowers, pop corn, and chewing gum, tried to hold her hand, and began, warily, to consider her as a prospective Mrs. Smith, weighing her qualifications, quite sensibly, for that responsible position. Oh, Ed had been a good deal of a "lady's man" in his time: knew well his many qualifications, and often congratulated himself that he would never be "caught" until he was "good and ready." There was more than one girl—he had only to "crook his finger."

While he was away he began to think of Anthy. She was somehow different from any girl he had ever known. He couldn't quite understand why it was, but there was something about her, even though she might be a little "slow" and "quiet" for a man like him. And the more he thought of her the

more excellent reasons occurred to him for yielding to his feelings. She was the owner of the *Star*, which was already beginning to show signs of vigorous life, and she was a "mighty smart girl" into the bargain. She would be an ornament to any man's house.

It was the vague glimmer of the new idea that any girl should not wish to become Mrs. Smith when she was given a fair opportunity that now occurred to him painfully, for the first time in his life. The thought of Nort began to grow upon him, the thought, also, that some of his rights were being trodden upon. Had he not come to the *Star* with the idea that Anthy—— Could he not have made a lot more money by going with the Dexter *Enterprise?*

It is astonishing how cunningly life prepares for its explosions, how adroitly it combines the nitre, the charcoal, the sulphur, of human nature. First it grinds the ingredients separately—as Ed Smith was being ground, as the spirit of Norton Carr was ground—and then it mixes them in a mill, say a pleasant country printing-office, with a wren's nest at the gable end, and there it subjects them to the enormous pressure of necessity, of pas-

sion, of ambition. And when the mixture is made, though the fuse which life lays may be long, the explosion is sure to follow. A spark, say a stick of pied type, or a vagabond printer absurdly looking for the truth of things, or the look in a girl's eyes, and, bang—the world will never again be exactly what it was before.

Events moved swiftly with the *Star* of Hempfield that forenoon. You would not believe that so much could happen in a drowsy country printing-office, on a drowsy Monday morning, in so short a time. I was there when Nort came in, all unsuspecting. He came in quietly, not at all like himself; he was, in fact, low in his spirits. He glanced at Ed Smith, and began, as usual, to take off his coat in the corner. Ed was sitting at his desk fiercely at work.

"Carr," said he, scarcely turning his head, "you needn't take off your coat. Won't need you any longer. Gotta economize. Gotta cut down expenses. I'll pay you what's coming to you right now."

There was a moment of absolute silence in the office. Tom, the cat, was asleep by the stove. Fergus and I waited breathlessly.

I fully expected to see Nort explode; I didn't know in just what way, but somehow, in Nort's way, whatever that might be. But he merely stood there, coat half off, looking utterly mystified. Ed turned halfway around.

"Here's your money," he said.

The thing in all its crude reality was still incomprehensible to Nort. He didn't know that such things were ever done in the world.

"You mean——" he stammered.

Ed was very angry. I excuse him somewhat on that ground, and Nort was only a tramp printer anyway.

"You're fired," he said doggedly, "and here's your wages to date."

I wish I could describe the effect on Nort. It was as though some light air blew across him. He had looked heavy and depressed when he came in: now his shoulders straightened, his chin lifted, and the old, reckless smile came into his face. He swept us all with a look of amused astonishment, and then, slipping back into his coat, said:

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Smith," and turned and went out of the office.

Ed jumped from his chair.

"Here's your cash," he said.

But Nort had gone out.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" observed Ed, quickly putting the money back in his pocket.

I am slow, slow! I have always wished since then that I had been quick enough to do what Fergus did. It was not that I did not love Nort——

When I looked around Fergus was gone. He had slipped out of the back door. He caught Nort at the gate, and grasped his hand so hard that Nort said it hurt him for a week afterward. He tried to say something, but his face worked so that he couldn't. Then he was suddenly ashamed of himself, and came running back into the office, his hair flying wildly. Tom, the cat, at that moment rising from his favourite spot near the stove, Fergus kicked at him vigorously—without hitting him.

Ed now began to stride about the office, head a little lifted, a bold look in the eye. He saw neither Fergus nor me. He was in a grand mood. I always imagined he must have felt at that moment something like Fitz-James when he met Roderick Dhu:

> Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
> From its firm base as soon as I.

He did not have long to wait. We heard the old Captain on the steps, thumping his cane, clearing his throat. I shall never forget how he looked when he came in at the door, his tall, soldierly figure, the long, shabby black coat, the thick silvery hair under the broad-brimmed hat, the beaming eye of him. Ever since the publication of his editorial on William J. Bryan, the Captain had been in great spirits.

"Nort!" he called, as he set down his cane.

No answer.

"Where's Nort?" he boomed. "Fergus, where's Nort? I want to show him my editorial on Theodore Roosevelt."

Ominous silence.

The old Captain looked up and about him. Fergus was busy at the cases.

"Where's Nort?" asked the old Captain sharply, this time directing his question at Ed Smith.

"I've fired him," said Ed. "Got to cut down expenses."

"You—fired—Nort?"

The old Captain's voice sounded as though it came from the bottom of a well.

"Yes," said Ed crisply, "I hired him—and now I've fired him."

Ed was still much in the mood of Fitz-James. He had always been somewhat contemptuous of the Captain. He not only regarded him as an old fogy, a vain old fogy, but as a dead weight upon the *Star*. Ed thought his editorials worse than nothing at all, and had resolved to get rid of the Captain at the first opportunity. It was too bad, of course, but—business is business.

When the Captain did not reply, Ed observed at large:

"The trouble with this office is that you all seem to think we are printing a newspaper for our health."

"Sold more extra copies of the *Star* last week than ever before," said Fergus.

"Yes," responded Ed bitterly, "and left out reading notices that would have brought in more than all your extras put together. That electric light announcement, and the notice of Dick McCullum's candidacy——"

At this the old Captain broke in with ominous deliberation.

"I want to know," said he, "if it is now the policy of this newspaper to support Democrats

for money, and fool the people of Hempfield with paid news about greedy corporations?"

"It's *my* policy," responded Ed, "to tap shoes for anybody that's got the price. I'm a practical man."

I never can hope to do justice by the scene which followed. The old Captain strode a step nearer and rested one hand on the corner of Ed Smith's desk, a majestic figure of wrath.

"Practical!" he exploded. "You are a blackguard, sir! You are a scoundrel, sir!"

He paused, drawing deep breaths.

"You're a traitor—you're a *Democrat*."

With all his assurance, Ed was completely taken back. He actually looked frightened. The Captain's tone now changed to one of irony.

"I suppose," he said, "you believe in flying machines."

Ed hesitated.

"And in woman suffrage!"

The art of scorn has fallen sadly into disrepute in these later days. Scorn fares hardly in an age of doubt and democracy. I can rarely feel it myself; but as it came rolling out of the old Captain that morning, I'll admit there was something grand about it.

By this time Ed had begun to recover himself.

"Well, we got to live, haven't we?" he asked.

It was very rare that the old Captain swore,

"Practical!" he exploded. "You are a blackguard, sir! You are a scoundrel, sir!"

for he was a sound Churchman, and when he did swear it was with a sort of reverence.

"No, by God," said the Captain, "we haven't got to live, we haven't got to live; but, by God! we've got to stand for the nation—and the Constitution—and the Republican party!"

He paused, threw back his beautiful old head, and shook his mane just a little. (How he would have liked to see himself at that moment!)

"The *Weekly Star* of Hempfield," he said, "will remain an incorruptible exponent of American institutions. The people may cease to believe in God and the Constitution, but the *Star* will remain firm and staunch. We shed our blood upon the field of Antietam: we stand ready to shed it again—for the nation, the Grand Old Party, and the high protective tariff. Though beaten upon by stormy seas, we shall remain impregnable."

I cannot describe how impregnable the old Captain looked, standing there by Ed's desk, one clenched fist raised aloft. He was at his best, and his best was better than you will often find in these days.

But the old Captain could no more understand Ed Smith than Ed could understand him. He would rather have laid his right

hand upon living coals of fire than to have taken what he considered a "dirty dollar" for advertising. And yet in his day, no man in Westmoreland County was a keener political manipulator than he. He had traded his influence quite simply and frankly for the public printing. Was it not the natural reward of the faithful party worker? Had he not stumped the state for Blaine? Had not congressmen come to his door with their hats in their hands offering him favours in exchange for his support? And he had travelled always on railroad passes, as was his due as an influential editor, and voted, when a member of the legislature, with sincere belief in the greatness of all captains of industry, for every railroad bill that came up.

But the idea of taking crude money for reading notices favourable to the electric lighting contract in Hempfield, or of publishing for payment the cards of Democrats—it was not in his lexicon. Times change, and the methods of men.

When the old Captain once got started on the freedom of the press he was hard to stop; but as he talked Ed's courage began to return, for he could never take the old Captain quite seri-

ously. At the first pause he broke in with a faint attempt at jocularity.

"Who's editing this paper, anyway, Captain?"

The old Captain looked at him in astonishment.

"Why, I am," said he. "I've edited the Hempfield *Star* for thirty years."

I think he really believed it.

"And what is more," he continued, "the *Star* is about to part company with Ed Smith."

Ed bounced out of his chair.

"What do you mean?" he cried—and there was a sure note of fear in his voice that was not lost upon the Captain.

"You're discharged, sir!"

Ed caught his breath.

"You can't do it!" he cried. "You can't do it: you don't own the paper! I've got a contract——"

The old Captain drew himself to his full height and pointed with one long arm at the door:

"*Go!*" said he.

It was grand.

He then turned to Fergus. "Fergus call

up my niece on the telephone. I wish to speak to her."

He walked up the length of the room and back again, his hands clasped behind him under his coat tails. He did not once look at Ed.

"Is this Anthy?" he asked, when Fergus handed him the telephone. "Anthy, I have just discharged Ed Smith. He will no longer cumber this office."

He paused.

"No, I said I have just discharged him. He was only small potatoes, anyway, and few in the hill."

He put down the telephone: Ed made as if to speak, but the old Captain waved him aside.

"Fergus," he said, "I have an editorial ready for this week's *Star*. Now let's get down to business."

Having delivered himself, he was light, he was gay.

CHAPTER XIII

ANTHY TAKES COMMAND

ANTHY was always late in reaching the office, if she came at all, on Monday mornings. It was one of the days when old Mrs. Parker came to help her, and it was necessary that the week be properly started in the household of the Doanes.

It is said of Goethe that he was prouder of his knowledge of the science of optics—which was mostly wrong—than he was of his poetry. Genius is often like that. It was so in the case of old Mrs. Parker, who considered herself incomparable as a cook (and once—this is town report—baked her spectacles in a custard pie), and held lightly her genius as a journalist. On any bright morning she could go out on her stoop, turn once or twice around, sniff the breezes, and tell you in voluminous

language what her neighbours were going to have for dinner, with interesting digressions upon the character, social standing, and economic condition of each of them.

Though she often tried Anthy's orderly soul, she was as much of a feature of the household on certain days every week as the whatnot in the corner of the parlour. She had been coming almost as long as Anthy could remember. For years she had amused, provoked, and tyrannized over Anthy's father, troubled his digestion with pies, and given him innumerable items for the *Star*. She was as good as any reporter.

On this particular autumn morning Mrs. Parker was unusually quiet, for her. She evidently had something on her mind. She had called upstairs only once:

"Anthy, where did you put the cinnamon?"

Now, Anthy, as usual, upon this intimation, for old Mrs. Parker never deigned to ask directly what she was to do, had come downstairs, and by an adroit, verbal passage-at-arms, in which both of them, I think, delighted, had diverted her intention of making pumpkin pies and centred her interest upon a less ambitious pudding. On this occasion Mrs.

Parker did not even offer to tell the story suggested by the catchword "cinnamon," of how a certain Flora Peters—you know, the Peterses of Hawleyville, cousins of the Hewletts—had once used pepper for cinnamon in a pie.

Anthy was fond of these mornings at home, especially just such crispy autumn mornings as this one. She loved to go about busily, a white cap over her bright hair, the windows upstairs all wide open to the sunshine, the cool breezes blowing in. She loved to have the beds spread open, and the rugs up, and plenty to do. At such times, and often also in the spring when she was working in her garden, she would break into bits of song, just snatches here and there, or she would whistle. In these moments of unconscious activity one might catch fleeting glimpses of the hidden Anthy. I like, somehow, more than almost anything else, to think of her as I saw her, a very few times, on occasions like these.

One song, or part of a song, I once heard her sing in an unguarded moment, a bit of old ballad in a haunting minor key, springs at this moment so clear in my memory that I can hear the very cadences of her voice. I don't

know where the words came from, or what the song was, nor yet the music of it:

"It is not for a false lover
That I go sad to see,
But it is for a weary life
Beneath the greenwood tree."

Bits of poetry were always coming to the surface with Anthy. I remember once, that very fall, as we were walking down the long lane homeward one Sunday afternoon from my farm, how Anthy, who had been silent for some time, suddenly made the whole world of that October day newly beautiful:

"The sweet, calm sunshine of October now
Warms the low spot; upon its grassy mould
The purple oak-leaf falls; the birchen bough
Drops its bright spoil like arrow heads of gold."

I remember looking at her rapt face as she repeated the words, and seeing the sunlight catch in her hair.

In some ways the Anthy, the real Anthy, of those days was only half awake. It is your unimaginative girl who sees in every dusty swain the possible hero of her heart; but she whose eyes are dazzled by the shining armour

of a knight-o'-dreams comes reluctantly awake. It is so with some of the finest women: they step lightly through the years, with untouched hearts. There was a great deal of her father in Anthy, a great deal of the old New Englander, treasuring the best jealousy inside.

I think sometimes that women are far better natural executives and organizers than men. To keep a great household running smoothly, provisioned, cleaned, made sweet and cheerful always, and to do it incidentally as it were, with a hundred other activities filling her thoughts, is an accomplishment not sufficiently appreciated in this world. Anthy, like the true women of her race, had this capacity highly developed. She had a real genius for orderliness, which is the sanity, if not the religion, of everyday life.

"I will say this for Anthy Doane," old Mrs. Parker was accustomed to remark, "she is turrible particular."

How often have we been astonished to see gentlewomen (I like the good old word) torn from the harbour of sheltered lives and serenely navigating their ships on the stormiest seas, but without real cause for our astonish-

ment, for they have merely applied in a wider field that genius for command and organization which they have long cultivated in their households. . We may yet come to look upon many of the functions of government as only a larger kind of housekeeping, and find that we cannot afford to dispense longer with the executive genius of women in all those activities which deal with the comforts of human kind. (It's true, Harriet.)

Mrs. Parker, as I have said, having something on her mind, was in condition of unstable equilibrium.

"When you was little, Anthy," she began finally, "I used to tell you to put on your rubbers when you went out in the rain, and to take your umbrella to school, and not forget your 'rithmetic. Didn't I, Anthy?"

"Why, yes, Margaret." Anthy was much mystified.

Old Mrs. Parker paused: "Well, I don't approve of this Norton Carr."

Anthy laughed. "Why, what's the matter with Norton Carr?"

Old Mrs. Parker closed her lips and wagged her head with a world of dark significance.

"What is it, Margaret?"

Mrs. Parker lowered her voice.

"He stimmylates," she said.

It was about the worst she could have said about poor Nort, except one thing—in Hempfield.

Anthy tried to draw her out still further, but not another word would she say. A long time afterward, when Anthy told me of this incident (how I have coveted the knowledge of every least thing in the lives of Nort and Anthy!), when she told me, she said reflectively: "I can't tell you how those words hurt me."

And then came the surprising telephone call from the old Captain, with the news that he had discharged Ed Smith!

It was characteristic of Anthy that when she put down the telephone receiver she was laughing. The tone of the Captain's voice and the picture she had of him, dramatically discharging Ed, were irresistible. But it was only for a moment, and the old problem of the *Star* leaped at her again. In the letters to Lincoln here in my desk I find that she referred to it repeatedly: "Ed Smith will not get on much longer with our vagabond, who isn't *really* a vagabond at all; and as for

Uncle Newt, it seems to me that he grows more difficult every day. What *shall* I do?"

Now that the crisis was here, she was very quiet about it. When she had put on her hat she stepped for a moment into the quiet, old-fashioned living-room, where her desk was, and the fireplace before which she and her father had sat together for so many, many evenings, and the picture of Lincoln over the mantel. She had not changed it in the least particular since her father's death, and it had always a soothing effect upon her: the picture of her mother, the familiar, well-thumbed books which her father had delighted in, the very chair where he loved to sit. She did not feel bold or confident, but the moment in the old room gave her a curious sense of calmness, as though there were something strong and sure back of her. She glanced up quickly at the countenance of Mr. Lincoln, and turned and went out of the house.

The explosion at the office had been followed by a dead calm. We were all awaiting the arrival of Anthy. After all, she was the owner of the *Star*. What would she do?

I saw Ed Smith glancing surreptitiously out of the window, and even the old Captain,

in spite of his jauntiness, seemed ill at ease. Only Fergus remained undisturbed. That Scotchman continued working steadily at the cases.

"You took it coolly, Fergus," I said to him in a low voice.

"Got to print a paper this week," he observed.

I verily believe if we had all deserted our jobs Fergus would have brought out the *Star* as usual on Wednesday, a little curtailed, perhaps, but on the dot.

Anthy came in looking perfectly calm. Ed Smith jumped from his seat at once.

"See here, Miss Doane," he began excitedly, "what right has the Captain to discharge me?"

The old Captain had arisen, too, and very formidable he looked. But my eyes were on Anthy. She stepped over to her uncle's side. She had a deep affection for this old uncle of hers. "Look out for your Uncle Newt," her father had said in the letter she found after his death. She put her arm through his, drew him toward her, and looking up at him, smiled a little.

"What right has the Captain to discharge me?" demanded Ed Smith.

"No right at all," she said.

"There!" exclaimed Ed, exultantly.

"But I have the right," said Anthy, "if I choose to exert it."

There was a curious finality in her voice—calmness and finality. The old Captain was frowning, but Anthy held him close by the arm. A moment of silence followed. I suppose we must, indeed, have been an absurd group of men standing there helplessly, for Anthy surveyed us with a swift glance.

"What *are* you all so serious about?" she asked.

While we were awkwardly bestirring ourselves, Anthy took off her hat, just as usual, put on her apron, just as usual. It was the natural-born genius of Anthy to have the orderly wheels of life running again. And presently, standing near the Captain's littered desk, she exclaimed:

"At last, at last, Uncle Newt, you've written your editorial on Roosevelt!"

She picked up the manuscript.

"Yes, Anthy," rumbled the Captain, "I have written my convictions about the Colonel. It was a duty I had."

The Captain was not yet placated, but

there was no resisting Anthy very long. "David will never be satisfied until he hears it," she said. She looked over the pages. "Have you said *exactly* what you think, Uncle?"

"Exactly," said the Captain; "I could not do less. But I wanted Nort to hear it."

"Well, where is Mr. Carr?" asked Anthy, looking about in surprise.

For a moment no one said a word. And then Ed Smith spoke:

"We've simply got to cut down expenses. I hired Carr when I thought we needed a cheap man to help Fergus—and now I've let him go."

For a moment Anthy stood silent, and just a little rigid, I thought. But it was only for a moment.

"We were going to have Uncle's editorial, weren't we? Mr. Carr can see it later."

She was now in complete command. She got the Captain down into his chair and put the manuscript in his hand. He cleared his throat, threw back his head, pleased in spite of himself.

"It was a hard duty, but here it is," he said, and began reading in a resonant voice:

"We have hesitated long and considered deeply before expressing the views of the *Star*

upon the recent sad apostasy of Theodore Roosevelt. We loved him like a son. We gloried in him as in an older brother. We followed that bright figure (in a manner of speaking) when he fought on the bloody slopes of San Juan, we were with him when he marched homeward in his hour of triumph to the plaudits of a grateful nation——'"

The Captain narrated vividly how the *Star* had stood staunchly with that peerless leader through every campaign. And then his voice changed suddenly, he drew a deep breath.

"But we are with him no longer. We know him now no more——"

He mourned him as a son gone astray, as a follower after vain gods. I remember just how Nort looked when he read this part of the editorial some time afterward, glancing up quickly. "Isn't it great! Doesn't it make you think of old King David: 'Oh, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!'"

But the editorial was not all mournful. It closed with a triumphant note. There was no present call to be discouraged about the nation or the Grand Old Party. Leaders might come and go, but the party of Lincoln, the party of Grant, the party of Garfield, with

undiminished lustre, would march ever onward to victory.

"The *Star*," he writes, "will remain faithful to its allegiance. The *Star* is old-line Republican, Cooper Union Republican—the unchanging Republicanism of the great-souled McKinley and of Theodore Roosevelt—before his apostasy."

It was wonderful! No editorial ever published in the Hempfield *Star* or, so far as I could learn, in any paper in the county, was ever as widely copied throughout the country as this one—copied, indeed, by some editors who did not know or love the old Captain as we did.

After such a stormy morning it was wonderful to see how quickly the troubled atmosphere of the *Star* began to clear. Four rather sheepish-looking men began to work with a complete show of absorption, while Anthy acted as though nothing had happened.

But there was one thing still on her mind. When I started for home, toward noon, she followed me out on the little porch.

"David," she said, "I want to speak to you."

She hesitated.

"I want you to find Norton Carr."

She laid her hand on my arm. "He hasn't been quite fairly treated."

She smiled, and looked at me wistfully. "We've got to keep the *Star* going somehow, haven't we?"

CHAPTER XIV

WE BEGIN THE SUBJUGATION OF NORT

HERE is a curious and interesting thing often to be noted by any man who looks around him, that we human creatures are all made up into uneven and restless bundles—family bundles, church bundles, political-party bundles, and a thousand amusing kinds of business bundles. It will also be observed that a very large part of us, nearly all of us who

are old and most of us who are women, are struggling as hard as ever we can (and without a bit of humour) to hold our small bundles together, while others are struggling with equal ferocity to burst out of their bundles and make new ones. And so on endlessly!

If you see any one particular specimen in any one particular bundle who is making himself obnoxious by wriggling and squirming and twisting with an utter disregard for the sensibilities of the bundle-binders, you may conclude that he is affected by the most mysterious influence, or power, or malady—whatever you care to call it—with which we small human beings have to grapple. I mean that he is growing. When you come to think of it, the most incalculable power in the life of men is the power of growth. If you could tell when any given human being was through growing, you could tell what to do with him; but you never can. Some men are ripe at twenty-five, and some are still adding power and knowledge at eighty. It is not inheritance, nor environment, nor wealth, nor position, that measures the difference between human beings, but rather the mysterious faculty of continued growth which resides within them. It is

growth that causes the tragedies of this world —and the comedies—and the sheer beauty of life. Here are a husband and wife bound together in the commonest of bundles: one stops growing, the other keeps on growing; consult almost any play, novel, poem, newspaper, or scandalous gossip, for the results. Consider the restless bundle of nations called Europe, one of which recently began to grow tremendously, began to squirm about in the bundle, began to demand room and air. What an almighty pother this has caused! What an altogether serious business for the bundle-binders!

These observations may seem to lead entirely around the celebrated barn of Robin Hood, but if you follow them patiently you will find that they bring you back at last (by way of Europe) to the dilapidated door of the quiet old printing-office of the *Star* of Hempfield. If you venture inside you will discover, besides a cat and a canary, one of the most interesting bundles of human beings I know anything about.

And one specimen in this bundle, as you may already suspect, has developed a prodigious power of squirming and wriggling, and otherwise making the bundle-binders of

the *Star* uncomfortable. I refer to Norton Carr.

The world, of course, is in a secret conspiracy against youth and growth. Any man who dares to be young, or to grow, or to be original, must expect to have the world set upon him and pound him unmercifully—and if that doesn't finish him off, then the world clings desperately to his coat tails, resolved that if it cannot stop him entirely it will at least go along with him and make travelling as difficult as possible. This latter process is what a friend of mine illuminatively calls the "drag of mediocrity."

But this punching and pounding is mostly good for youth and originality—good if it doesn't kill—for it proves the strength of youth, tests faith and enthusiasm, and measures surely the power of originality. And as for the provoking drag upon their coat tails, youth and originality should reflect that this is the only way by which mediocrity ever gets ahead!

As I look back upon the history of the *Star* it seems to me it is a record of Nort's wild plunges within our bundle, and our equally wild efforts to keep him disciplined. I say

"our" efforts, but I would, of course, except Ed Smith. Ed had a narrow vision of what that bundle called the *Star* should be. He wanted it no larger than he was, so that he could dominate it comfortably, and when Nort became obstreperous, he simply cut the familiar cord which bound Nort into the bundle: to wit, his wages. Ed had the very common idea that the only really important relationships between human beings are determined by monetary payments, which can be put on or put off at will. But the fact is that we are bound together in a thousand ways not set down in the books on scientific management. For example, if that rascal of a Norton Carr had not been so interesting to us all, had not so worked his way into the hearts of us, I should never have gone hurrying after him (at Anthy's suggestion) on that November day. And it might—who knows—have been better in dollars and cents for the *Star*, if I had *not* hurried. No, as an old friend of mine in Hempfield, Howieson, the shoemaker (a wise man), often remarks: "They say business is business. Well, I say business *ain't* business if it's *all* business." Business grows not as it eliminates talent or youth,

however prickly or irritating to work with, but by making itself big enough to use all kinds of human beings.

I recall yet the strange thrill I had when I left the printing-office that day to search for Nort. It had given me an indescribable pleasure to have Anthy ask me to help (her "we" lingered long in my thoughts—lingers still), and I had, moreover, the feeling that it depended somewhat on me to help bind together the now fiercely antagonistic elements of the *Star*.

It may appear absurd to some who think that only those things are great which are big and noisy, that anything so apparently unimportant should stir a man as these events stirred me; but the longer I live the more doubtful I am of the distinction between the times and the things upon which the world places the tags "Important" and "Unimportant."

As I set forth I remember how very beautiful the streets of Hempfield looked to me.

"Have you seen Norton Carr?" I asked here, and, "Have you seen Norton Carr?" I asked there—tracing him from lair to lair, and friend to friend, and thus found myself

tramping out along the lower road that leads toward the west and the river. He had sent a telegram, I found in the course of my inquiry, which added a dash of mystery to my quest and stirred in me a curious sense of anxiety.

The very feeling of that dull day, etched deep in my memory by the acid of emotion, comes vividly back to me. There had been no snow, and the fields were brown and bare —dead trees, dead hedges of hazel and cherry, crows flying heavily overhead with melancholy cries, and upon the hills beyond the river dull clouds hanging like widows' weeds: a brooding day.

At every turn I looked for Nort and, thus looking, came to the bridge. It was the same spot, the same bridge, where, some years before, the Scotch preacher and I, driving late one evening, looked anxiously for the girl Anna. I can see her yet, wading there in the dark water, her skirts all floating about her, hugging her child to her breast and crying piteously, "I don't dare, oh, I don't dare, but I must, I must!" Of all that I have told elsewhere.

I stopped a moment and looked down into

the water where it reflected the dark mood of the day, and then turned along the road that runs between the alders of the river edge and the beeches and oaks of the hill. It was the way Nort and I had taken more than once, talking great talk. I thought I might find him there.

And there, indeed, I did find him—and know how some old chivalric knight must have felt when at last he overtook the quarry which was to be the guerdon of his lady.

"I shall take him back a captive," I said to myself.

Nort was sitting under a beech tree, looking out upon the cold river. A veritable picture of desolation! He was whistling in a low monotone, a way he had. Poor Nort! Life had opened the door of ambition for him, just a crack, and he had caught glimpses of the glory within, only to have the door slammed in his face. If he had walked upon cerulean heights on Sunday he was grovelling in the depths on Monday. It was all as plain to me as I approached him as if it had been written in a book.

"Hello, Nort," said I.

He started from his place and looked around at me.

"Hello, David," said he carelessly. "What brings you here?"

"You do," said I.

"I do!"

"Yes, I'm about to take you back to Hempfield. The *Star* finds difficulty in twinkling without you."

I told him what Anthy had said, and of what I felt to be a new effort to control the policies of the *Star*. But Nort slowly shook his head.

"No, David. This is the end. I have finished with Hempfield."

I wish I could convey the air of resigned determination that was in his words; also the cynicism. Pooh! If Hempfield didn't want him, Hempfield could go hang. He was at the age when he thought he could get away from life. He had not learned that the only way to get on with life is not to get out of it, but to get into it.

He told me that he had wired for money to go home; he drew his brows down in a hard scowl and stared out over the river.

"I've stopped fooling with life," said he tragically.

I could have laughed at him, and yet, somehow, I loved him. It was a great moment in his life. I sat down by him under the beech.

"I'm going to be free," said Nort. "I'm going to do things yet in this world."

"Free of what, Nort?" I asked.

"Ed Smith—for one thing."

"Have you thought that wherever you go you will be meeting Ed Smiths?"

He did not reply.

"I'm sorry," I said, "that you've surrendered."

"Surrendered?" He winced as though I had cut him.

"Yes, surrendered. Haven't you sent for money? Haven't you given up? Aren't you trying to run away?"

Nort jumped from his place.

"No!" he shouted. "Ed Smith discharged me. I would rather cut off my right hand than work in the same county with him again."

"So you have balked at the first hurdle—and are going to run away!"

I have thought often since then of that

perilous moment, of how much in Nort's future life turned upon it.

Nort's eyes, usually so blue and smiling, grew as black as night.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean just what I said"—I looked him in the eye—"you are running away before the battle begins."

For a moment I thought I had lost him, and my heart began to sink within me, and then—it was beautiful—he stepped impulsively toward me:

"Well, what do you think I should do, anyway?"

"Nort," I said, "only yesterday you were enthusiastic over the idea of getting the truth about Hempfield, of publishing a really great country newspaper."

"What an ass I was!"

"Wrong!" I said.

"David," he cut in petulantly, "I don't get what you mean."

"I'll tell you, Nort: The greatest joy in this world to a man like you is the joy of new ideas, of wonderful plans—— Now, isn't it?"

"Yes. I certainly thought for a few days

last week that I had found the pot at the end of the rainbow."

"It was only the rainbow, Nort: if you want the pot you've got to dig for it."

"What do you mean?"

"You think that you can stop with enthusiastic dreams and vast ideas. But no vision and no idea is worth a copper cent unless it is brought down to earth, patiently harnessed, painfully trained, and set to work. There is a beautiful analogy that comes often to my mind. We conceive an idea, as a child is conceived, in a transport of joy; but after that there are long months of growth in the close dark warmth of the soul, to which every part of one's personality must contribute, and then there is the painful hour of travail when at last the idea is given to the world. It is a process that cannot be hurried nor borne without suffering. And the punishment of those who stop with the joy of conception, thinking they can skim the delight of life and avoid its pain, is the same in the intellectual and spiritual spheres as it is in the physical—barrenness, Nort, and finally a terrible sense of failure and of loneliness."

I said it with all my soul, as I believe it.

When I stopped, Nort did not at once respond, but stood looking off across the river, winding a twig of alder about his finger. Suddenly he looked around at me, smiling:

"I'm every kind of a fool there is, David."

I confess it, my heart gave a bound of triumph. And it seemed to me at that moment that I loved Nort like a son, the son I have never had. I could not help slipping my arm through his, and thus we walked slowly together down the road.

"But Ed Smith——" he expostulated presently.

"Nort," I said, "you aren't the only person in this world, although you are inclined to think so. There are Ed Smiths everywhere —and old Captains and David Graysons—and you may travel where you like and you'll find just about such people as you find at Hempfield, and they'll treat you just about as you deserve. Ed Smith is the test of you, Nort, and of your enthusiasms. You've got to reconcile your ideas with corned beef and cabbage Nort, for corned beef and cabbage *is*."

I have been ashamed sometimes since when I think how vaingloriously I preached to Nort that day (after having got him down), for I

have never believed much in preaching. It usually grows so serious that I want to laugh —but I could not have helped it that November afternoon.

I see two men, just at evening of a dull day, walking slowly along the road toward Hempfield, two gray figures, half indistinguishable against the barren hillsides. All about them the dead fields and the hedges, and above them the wintry gray of the sky, and crows lifting and calling. Knowing well what is in the hot hearts of those two men—the visions, the love, the pain, the hope, yes, and the evil— I swear I shall never again think of any life as common or unclean. I shall never look to the exceptional events of life for the truth of life.

The two men I see are friend and friend, very near together, father and son almost; and you would scarcely think it, but if you look closely and with that Eye which is within the eye you will see that they have just been called to the colours and are going forth to the Great War. You will catch the glint on the scabbards of the swords they carry; you will see the look of courage on the face of the young recruit, and the look, too, on the face

of the old reservist. In the distance they see the fortress of Hempfield with its redoubts and entanglements. They are setting forth to take Hempfield, at any cost—their Captain commands it.

Near the town of Hempfield, as you approach it from the west, the road skirts a little hill. As we drew nearer I saw some one walking upon the road. A woman. She was stepping forth firmly, her figure cut in strong and simple lines against the sky, her head thrown back, showing the clear contour of her throat and the firm chin. A light scarf, caught in the wind, floated behind. Suddenly I felt Nort seize my arm, and exclaim in low, tense voice:

"Anthy!"

I thought his hand trembled a little, but it may have been my own arm. I remember hearing our steps ring cold on the iron earth, and I had a strange sense of the high things of life.

She had not seen us. She was walking with one hand lifted to her breast, the fingers just touching her dress, in a way she sometimes had. I shall not forget the swift, half-startled glance from her dark and glowing eyes when

she saw us, nor the smile which suddenly lighted her face.

I suppose all of us were charged at that moment with a high voltage of emotion. I know that Anthy, walking thus with her hand raised, was deep in the troubled problems of the *Star*. I know well what was in the heart of Nort, and I know the vain thoughts I was thinking; and yet we three stood there in the gray of the evening looking at one another and exchanging at first only a few commonplace words.

Presently Anthy turned to Nort with the direct way she had, and said to him lightly, smiling a little:

"I hope you will not desert the *Star*. We must make it go—all of us together."

Nort said not a word, but looked Anthy in the eyes. When we moved onward again, however, his mood seemed utterly changed. He walked quickly and began to talk volubly—Jiminy! If they'd let themselves go! Greatest opportunity in New England! National reputation—I could scarcely believe that this was the same Nort I had found only an hour before moping by the river.

As we came into Hempfield the lights had begun to come out in the houses; a belated

farmer in his lumber wagon rattled down the street. Men were going into the post office, for it was the hour of the evening mail; we had a whiff, at the corner, of the good common odour of cooking supper. So we stopped at the gate of the printing-office, and looked at each other, and felt abashed, did not know quite what to say, and were about to part awkwardly without saying anything when Nort seized me suddenly by the arm and rushed me into the office.

"Hello, Fergus!" he shouted as we came in at the door.

Fergus stood looking at him impassively, saying nothing at all. He had compromised himself once before that day by giving way to his emotions, and did not propose to be stampeded a second time.

But the old Captain had no such compunctions, and almost fell on Nort's neck.

"The prodigal is returned," he declared. "Nort, my boy, I want to read you my editorial on Theodore Roosevelt."

Just at this moment Ed Smith came in. I wondered and trembled at what might happen, but Nort was in his grandest mood.

"Hello, Ed!" he remarked carelessly. "Say,

I've thought of an idea for making Tole, the druggist, advertise in the *Star*."

"You have?" responded Ed in a reasonably natural voice.

Thus we were rebundled, at least temporarily. I think of these events as a sort of diplomatic prelude for the real war which was to follow. I was the diplomat who lured Nort back to us with fine words, but old General Fergus was waiting there grimly at the cases, in full preparedness, to play his part. For this was not the final struggle, nor the most necessary for Nort. That was reserved for a simpler man than I am: that was left for Fergus.

CHAPTER XV

I GET BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH ANTHY

AS WE look backward, those times in our lives which glow brightest, seem most worth while, are by no means those in which we have been happiest or most successful, but rather those in which, though painful and even sorrowful, we have been most necessary, most *desired*. To be needed in other human lives—is there anything greater or more beautiful in this world?

It was in the weeks that followed upon these events that I came to know Anthy best, nearest, deepest—to be of most use to her and to

the *Star*. A strange thing it was, too; for the nearer I came to her, the farther away I seemed to find myself! She was very wonderful that winter. I saw her grow, strengthen, deepen, under that test of the spirit, and with a curious unconsciousness of her own development, as she shows in the one letter to Lincoln of that period which has been saved. She seemed to think it was all a part of the daily work; that the *Star* must be preserved, and that it was incumbent upon her to do it.

In those days I was often at her home, sometimes walking from the office with her and the old Captain, sometimes with the old Captain, sometimes alone with Anthy. She was not naturally very talkative, especially, as I found, with one she knew well and trusted; but I think I have never known any other human being who seemed so much alive just underneath.

It was on one of these never-to-be-forgotten evenings in the old library of her father's house, with the books all around, that I came first into Anthy's deeper life. A draft from an open door stirred the picture of Lincoln on the wall above the mantelpiece, and a letter, slipping from behind it, dropped almost

at my feet. I stooped and picked it up and read the writing on the envelope:

"*To Abraham Lincoln.*"

Anthy's attention had been momentarily diverted to the door, and she did not see what had happened.

"A letter to Lincoln," I said aloud, turning it over in my hand.

I shall never forget how she turned toward me with a quick intake of her breath, the colour in her face, and her hand slowly lifting to her breast. She took a step toward me, and I, knowing that I had somehow touched a deep spring of her life, held out the letter. A moment we stood thus, a moment I can never forget. Then she said in a low voice:

"Read it, David."

I cut the envelope and read the letter to Lincoln, and knew that Anthy had opened a way into her confidence for me that had never before been opened to any one else.

"David," she said, "I wanted you to know. In some ways you have come closer to me than any one else except my father."

She said it without embarrassment, straight

After that she opened her heart more and more to me—
a little here, a little there

at me with clear eyes. I was like her father. I understood.

I begged that letter of her, and others written both before and after, and keep them in the securest part of my golden treasury. After that she opened her heart more and more to me—a little here, a little there. I waited for those moments, counted on them, tried to avoid the slightest appearance of any jarring emotion, found them incomparably beautiful. She gave me vivid glimpses of her early life, of the books she liked best and the poetry, told me with enthusiasm of her college life and the different girls who were her friends (showing me their pictures), and finally, and choicest of all, she told me, a little here and a little there, of the curious imaginative adventures which had been so much a part of her girlhood. I presume I took all these things more seriously than she did, for she exhibited them in no solemn vein, as though they were important, but always in an amusing or playful light—here with a bit of mock heroics, there with half-wistful laughter. And yet, through it all, I could see that they had meant a great deal to her.

I think, I am almost sure, that Anthy had

never at this time had a love affair in any ordinary sense. To the true romance and the truly romantic—and by this I do not mean sentimental—the realities of love are often late in coming. To the true romance the idea of marriage is at first repugnant, will not be thought about, for it seeks to square and conventionalize a great burst of the spirit. The inner life is so keen, so vivid, that it satisfies itself, and it must indeed be a prince who would kiss awake the eyes of the dreamer.

Some of these things, when I began this narrative, I had no intention of setting down in cold type, for they are among the deepest experiences in my life, and yet if I am to give an idea of what Anthy was and of the events which followed, it is imposed upon me to leave nothing out.

I do not wish to indicate, however, that the talks I had with Anthy usually or even often reached these depths of the intimate. These were the rare and beautiful flowers which blossomed upon the slow-growing branches of the tree of intimacy. It was a curious thing, also, that while she let me more and more deeply into her own life she knew less about what was in my life than many other

friends, far less even than Nort. Youth is like that, too, and even when essentially unselfish, it is terribly absorbed in the wonders of its own being. I knew what it meant. In a way it was the price I paid for the utter trust she had in me.

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLD CAPTAIN COMES INTO HIS OWN

IT WAS a great winter we had in the office of the *Star*. It was in those months that we really made the *Star*. It was curious, indeed, once we began to be knitted together in a new bundle—with Anthy's quiet and strong hand upon us—how the qualities in each of us which had seriously threatened to disrupt the organization, had set us all by the ears, were the very qualities which contributed most to the success which followed. It all seems clear enough now, though vague and

uncertain then, that what we really did was to *use* the obstreperous and irritating traits of each of us instead of trying to repress them.

There was the old Captain, for example. Ed thought him a "dodo," and wanted to put him on the shelf, where many a vigorous old man's heart has bitterly rusted out just because his loving friends, lovingly taking his life work out of his hands, have been too stupid to know how to use the treasures of his experience. Nort smiled at the way he tourneyed like Don Quixote with windmills of issues long dead, and I was impatient, the Lord forgive me, with his financial extravagances at a time when the *Star* was barely making a living. But Anthy loved him.

I don't know exactly how it came about, but one evening when we were all in the office together the talk turned on the Civil War. Some one asked the Captain:

"You knew General McClellan personally, didn't you, Cap'n?"

I remember how the old Captain squared himself up in his chair.

"Yes, I knew Little Mac. I knew Little Mac——"

It took nothing at all to set the Captain off, and he was soon in full flood.

"I said to Little Mac, riding to him at full gallop . . . and Little Mac said to me:

"'Captain Doane.'

"'Yes, sir, General,' said I.

"'Do you see that rebel battery down there on the hillside?'

"'I do, General.'

"'Well, Cap'n Doane,' said he, 'that battery must be taken—at any cost. May I depend on you?'

"'General,' said I, 'I will do my duty,' and I wheeled on my horse and rode to the front of my troop.

"'Forward—*March!* Draw—*Sabres!* Gallop—— *Charge!*——'"

By this time the old Captain was on his feet, cane in hand for a sabre, the wonderful light of a by-gone conflict shining in his eyes. I could see him charging down the hill with his clattering troop; hear the clash of arms and the roll of musketry; see the flags flying and the men falling—dust and smoke and heat —the cry of wounded horses. . . . They took the battery.

Well, when he finished his story that even-

ing there was a pause, and then I saw Anthy suddenly lean forward, her hands clasped hard and her face glowing.

"Such stories as that," she said, "ought not to be lost, Uncle Newt. They are *good* for people. The coming generation doesn't know what its fathers suffered and struggled for—or what the country owes to them——" And then, wistfully: "I wish those stories might never be lost."

Instantly Nort sprung from his chair, for great ideas when they arrived seemed to prick him physically as well as mentally.

"Say," he almost shouted, "I have it! Let's have the Cap'n write the story of his life—and, by Jiminy, publish it in the *Star*. Everybody knows the Cap'n—they'd eat it up."

It was Nort's genius that he could see, instantly, the greater possibilities of things, and his suggestion quite carried us away. We all began to talk at once:

"Print the Captain's picture, a big one on the first page. A story every week. Why, he *knew* James G. Blaine——"

Anthy leaned back in her chair, her eyes like stars, looked at Nort, and looked at him.

When we went out that night the old Captain threw a big arm over Nort's shoulder. The tears were running quite unheeded down the old fellow's face.

"Nort, my boy," he said, "I love you like a son."

He was happier that night than he had been before in years.

The next morning Nort appeared at the office with a tremendous announcement, headed: *Captain Doane's Story of His Life*, which would, on a conservative estimate, have filled an entire page of the *Star*. And the old Captain, who need never have taken off his hat to Dickens or Dumas where copiousness was concerned, began to write—enormously. The dear old fellow, looking back into his own past, discovered anew a hero after his own heart, and as the incidents jumped at him out of his memory, he could scarcely put them down fast enough. He filled reams of yellow copy paper.

With the first article we published a three-column half-tone portrait of the Captain, his head turned a little to one side to show the full lift of his brow, and one hand thrust carelessly and yet artfully into the bosom of his

long coat. Oh, very wonderful! The first article, headed,

EARLY MEMORIES OF HEMPFIELD

was really excellent, after Anthy had cut out two thirds of the old Captain's copy—which no other one of us would have dared to do.

Well, in an old town, in an old country, where the memories of many people reached far back, where many had known Captain Doane all their lives, this article instantly found sympathetic readers, and began to be talked about. We felt it at once in the demand for papers. Later came the stories of early political affairs in Hempfield and, indeed, in New England, and stories of the war which were really thrilling. Other headings were: "*How I Met General McClellan*," and "*Reminiscences of James G. Blaine*."

These not only awakened local interest, but they began to be clipped and quoted in outside newspapers, even in Boston and New York. A reporter was sent down from Boston to "write up" the old Captain. It was quite a triumph. The Captain began to have visitors, old friends and old citizens, as he had

never had before. They became almost a nuisance in the office. But the Captain was in his element: he thrived on it; his eye brightened; he walked, if possible, still more erect. His very mood, indeed, for his fighting blood was up, gave us some difficult problems. Nearly every week he would pause in the course of his narrative to smite the Democratic party, to cry "Fudge" at flying machines, or to visit his scorn upon the "initiative, referendum and recall." And one week he cut loose grandly upon woman suffrage, after he had first expressed his chivalric admiration for the "gentle sex" and quoted Sir Walter Scott:

> "Oh, woman, in our hours of ease
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please," etc., etc.

Nort brought me the copy, laughing.

"I asked the Captain," he said, "if he thought Anthy was uncertain, coy, and hard to please."

"What did he say?"

"He waved me aside. 'Oh, Anthy!' he said, as if she did not count at all. You know how the Captain lays down the eternal laws of life and then lets all his personal friends break

'em! . . . What would you do about the passage, anyway?"

"Why print it," I said. "It's the old Captain himself."

And print it we did.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH CERTAIN DEEP MATTERS OF THE HEART ARE PRESENTED

ED SMITH and Nort must have tried Anthy terribly in these days, Nort probably far more than Ed, because he was a more complicated human being, less broken to any sort of harness, and blest (or cursed) with an amazing gift of intimacy. Like many people who live most vividly within, he never seemed to have any proper idea of the lines which separate human beings. To some conventional natures the most refined meanings attach to their "Good mornings" and "How-d'ye does," and their confidences, shut away in a close

inner sanctum, like the high court of a secret society, are only to be approached ceremonially by those who have the insignia and the password; and where, having arrived and expecting hidden wonders and beauties, you discover only still more ceremonial. A truly conventional person cuts the same at the core as at the rind.

Nort never seemed to remember that most people one meets love to fence politely about the weather or the state of their health, but incontinently whacked them at once on their raw souls with whatever poker he might then be mending the fires of his heart. And he did it all, never crudely, but with such irrepressible and beguiling spirits, with such confidence that whatever interested him most at the moment must also interest you—as it usually did—that he was not to be resisted.

Now I do not believe that Nort at this time had any conscious idea of making love to Anthy, certainly not of falling in love with her. He was entirely too much absorbed in Nort. But he turned toward her as instinctively as a flower turns to the sun, and was a hundred times more dangerous to a girl like Anthy for being just what he was. He liked to be with

her, felt comfortable with her, thought of his place in the office as her employee, when he thought of it at all, as a rather uncomfortable joke, and stepped irresistibly within the defences of her reserve, and in spite of everything remained there. He told her what he thought about newspapers, baseball, the immortality of the soul, dress clothes, and the novels of H. G. Wells, looking at her sometimes with a little wrinkle of earnestness between his eyes, but oftener with a look of amusement—yes, of deviltry—which said to her as plainly as words could have framed it: "You and I have a wonderful secret between us, haven't we?"

He was apparently oblivious to the fact that she was a woman at all, and yet away down within him, as the ocean knows of the primeval monsters hidden in its depths, he knew that Anthy was a woman: knew it with a dumb and swelling strength he himself had never fathomed; and he knew, too, with that instinctive knowledge which is the deepest of all—such is the trickiness of the human spirit—that this was the way of all ways to reach Anthy.

When I think of the Nort of those days, all

the lawless possibilities of his ardent temperament, I wonder and I tremble! I wonder sometimes at the miracle by which youth *ever* escapes destruction. And in Nort's case, as in Anthy's, it was a narrow, narrow margin, as I know better than any one else. Poor Nort!

Happy Nort! No such close confidences existed between Anthy and him as between Anthy and me. Nort knew nothing of the deep and beautiful life within which she had shown to me—and me alone—could not at that time have understood it, if he had known of it (so I think), and yet there he was, a mere boy, a stranger almost, closer to her than I was. A strange thing, life!

CHAPTER XVIII

NORT SNIFFS

I HAD thought the life in the office of the *Star* exciting enough before the explosion which resulted in the discharge of Norton Carr, as indeed it was, but it was really not to be compared with that which followed. No sooner had Nort returned than his spirits again began to soar. He felt that he now had Anthy's influence strongly behind him, and

that, no matter what happened, Ed Smith could not interfere with him. Ed himself accepted the situation as gracefully as he could, and comforted himself with the reflection that Nort was, after all, receiving no more wages than before.

Nort had at least one clear characteristic that must belong to genius—he dared let himself go. He had supreme confidence in himself. Most men when they spread their wings and sail off into the blue empyrean more than half expect to fall, but Nort never cast his eye downward nor doubted the strength of his wings.

I have only to close my eyes to see him, his whole slim, strong body suddenly stiffening, quivering under the impact of an idea—a "great idea" it always was with him—his eyes suddenly growing dark with excitement, his legs nervously bestirring themselves to carry him up and down the room, while he thrust one hand through his hair and with the other emphasized the torrent of exclamations which poured out of him. At these moments he was one of the most beautiful human beings that ever I have seen. And in the midst of his wild enthusiasms he was as likely as

not, at any moment, to see some absurd or humorous angle of the subject he was talking about, and to burst suddenly into laughter, laughter at himself and at us for listening soberly to him. He never let us laugh first!

One of his early suggestions after he came back was the autobiography of the old Captain, of which I have already spoken. He knew it would be a success, as indeed it was, a very great success; but it was only one of a hundred things which Nort suggested during that winter.

"Say, Ed," he said one day, "why can't we get a new turn on our advertisements, make 'em interesting!"

Ed looked at him incredulously. "What do you mean?"

Ed considered himself a pastmaster in the art of getting, writing, and composing advertisements, and he rather resented Nort's suggestion.

"Why," said Nort, "look at 'em! They're all just alike, and nobody cares to read 'em: 'Respectfully informs,' 'Most reasonable terms,' 'Solicits continuance!'"

Nort spread open the paper with growing glee. Anthy was already laughing.

"And look here," he snorted, "'guarantees

satisfaction,' 'large and elegant assortment,' 'lowest prices.'"

"Well," said Ed, "what would you have? They pay their good money for these ads. It shows that they're satisfied."

"No," said Nort, "it only shows that they don't know any better."

He walked quickly down the room and back again, all our eyes upon him.

"I'll tell you what! Let's publish the picture of every business man who advertises with us right in the middle of his advertisement, and then invite our readers to watch for the 'Hempfield Gallery of Business Success.'"

To this plan Ed had a thousand objections, and the old Captain, much as he liked Nort, frowned upon it, and even Fergus scowled; but Anthy said:

"Let's see what can be done."

So Nort confidently sallied forth, and went first to John G. Graham, groceryman, whose advertisements had been a feature of the *Star* for twenty years, and who always renewed his agreement with the observation that he s'posed he'd have to, but he never seen the good it was to him. He was a large man, as flaccid as a

bag of meal, with a rather serious countenance, hair smoothly roached back, and a big gray moustache. He was one of the selectmen of the town, and secretly not a little vain of his position and of his success.

"Your store is one of the best-smelling places in this town," said Nort. "I always stop when I go by to take a sniff of it. I should think it would make people who come in here want to buy."

He began to sniff, turning his head first this way and then that. To Mr. Graham this was a novel and interesting suggestion, and in a moment's time he also began sniffing in a solemn and dignified way.

"It does smell good," he admitted. "Never thought of it before."

This was the opening that Nort wanted. He began explaining, with an air of repressed enthusiasm which conveyed a wonderful conviction of the importance of what he was saying, the new plans of the *Star*. He quite took Mr. Graham into his confidence.

"We're now going to get the business men of Hempfield talked about, Mr. Graham," said Nort, bringing down his fist upon the top of a cracker box. "We're going to make

people trade here instead of sending away for their groceries!"

This was an important point with Mr. Graham. If there was one thing he hated above any other it was the invasion of Hempfield by the mail-order houses. So he turned his head to one side, frowning a little, and listened to Nort.

"Trouble is," said Nort, "your ad isn't interesting. Same thing you've had for ten years, and people have got so used to seeing it they don't read it any more. Now those fellows out in Chicago are succeeding because they know how to advertise. If you keep up with them, you've got to change your methods. Bring your advertising up to date! I say, let's *make* the people read what the business people of Hempfield have got to say to them."

Mr. Graham frowned still more deeply, wondering what all this meant and at just what point Nort would ask him to pay something. Mr. Graham was cynically sure that it would all boil down sooner or later to a question of money, and he had not lived an entire lifetime in Hempfield without being equally sure that no one would get a dime out of him without earning every last cent of it.

Nort tore a sheet of wrapping paper from the roll and put it on the counter.

"See here now: This is how I'd do it—just for a suggestion." And he began to write on the paper:

Some of the Good Things one may smell
upon stepping into
JOHN G. GRAHAM'S STORE
Delicious Coffee from Brazil
Molasses from New Orleans
Spices from Araby

"What's Araby?" asked Mr. Graham. "My spices are all from Boston."

"Araby," said Nort, "is where they grow 'em."

"Oh!" said Mr. Graham.

Cookies from Buffalo
Fragrant New Cheese

"What else is it that smells?" asked Nort, lifting up his nose and sniffing discriminatively.

Mr. Graham also lifted up his nose and sniffed, and then, looking at Nort, solemnly remarked:

"Kerosene and codfish."

"Wouldn't make the list *too* long, would you, Mr. Graham?"

"S'pose not, s'pose not," said Mr. Graham.

When you come into our Store
SNIFF—Then BUY.
Our prices are the lowest

"How's that, now?" exclaimed Nort, stepping back and observing his work with delight. "Try that experiment, Mr. Graham, and then watch the people as they come into the store. Just watch 'em. They will all be sniffing like pointer dogs! You'll *know* then that they have read your advertisement."

A smile broke gradually over Mr. Graham's countenance. Nort's picture touched his slow imagination, and he could actually see old Mrs. Dexter coming in with her basket, sniffing like a pointer dog. Nort had given him something brand new in a humdrum world —and funny. In the country there is always such a consuming and ungratified need of something to laugh at. Any one who can make the country laugh can have his way with it.

Nort saw that he was winning, and pursued his advantage closely. He explained with perfect assurance his plan of publishing what

he called the "Hempfield Gallery of Business Success," a portrait with each advertisement; and, having already opened Mr. Graham's imagination just a crack, was able now to enter with his larger plans. Having got a tentative promise to try this extraordinary innovation, and innovations were like earthquakes in Hempfield, Nort rushed over to see Mr. Tole, the druggist, and using Mr. Graham as an opening wedge, got Mr. Tole to the point of saying, "I'll see." Then he went into Henderson's drygoods store and, using the promises of both Mr. Graham and Mr. Tole, worked Mr. Henderson into what might be called a state of reluctant preparedness. Every time he got a new man he went back to all the others with the news, until they began to think themselves a part of the conspiracy—and Mr. Graham afterward considered himself the real originator of this daring scheme for the uplift of Hempfield.

From the way Nort worked at this scheme, coming back after each assault to tell us with glee of his experiences, one would have thought he was having the time of his life, as, indeed, he was. It was still a great joke to him; and yet I saw his eyes often turn toward Anthy,

eageriy seeking her approval. And Anthy would sit very quiet in her chair, looking at Nort with level eyes, smiling just a little, and once or twice after he had turned away, I saw that she still kept her eyes upon him with a curious, questioning, wistful look. Fergus saw it, too, always watching silently from the cases.

Well, we launched the "Hempfield Gallery" with tremendous effect. Nort had not only increased the number of advertisements but had actually succeeded in getting all the advertisers to pay for making the cuts of themselves. It was really very effective: and Ed, now that the plan was launched, was able to sell many extra copies of the paper. As for Nort, that irrepressible young rapscallion was in the highest of spirits. And every day when he came down the street he would look in at Mr. Graham's store:

"Sniffin', are they, Mr. Graham?"

"They certainly *are* sniffin'," that ponderous groceryman would respond.

Both would then sniff solemnly in unison, and Nort would go on down the street laughing. A new joke in Hempfield! I do not wonder that he got them.

CHAPTER XIX

FERGUS'S FAVOURITE POEM

I RECALL now vividly the growing excitement of those winter days, the interest we all had. Each day brought something new, some surprised comment in a "contemporary," some quotation from a city paper, some curious visitor to see the old Captain, some new subscriber or advertiser, some necessity for adding to our order for "insides."

One of the best ways to attract and interest

other people is by going about one's own business as though it were the most wonderful and fascinating thing in the world. People soon begin to look on wistfully, begin to wonder what all this activity and triumphant joyousness is about, and are presently drawn to it as bees are drawn by a blooming clover field. So the printing-office began to be a place of importance and curiosity in Hempfield. The news spread that almost any surprise might be expected in the *Star*.

"It's that fellow Carr that's doing it," said old Mr. Kenton, voicing the hopeless philosophy of the country when facing competition with the city. "One o' these days, you'll see, he'll get a better job in Bosting, and that'll be the end of *him*."

In the meantime, however, we were too busy to indulge in any forebodings, and as for Nort the whole great golden world of real life was opening to him for the first time.

No sooner had the interest in the old Captain's autobiography somewhat subsided, and the advertising scheme, with several lesser matters, been disposed of, than Nort's fertile brain began to devise new schemes.

"Say," he exclaimed one winter day, com-

ing in from one of his expeditions and looking us all over as though we were specimens of a curious sort, "this office is a pretty interesting place."

"Just found it out?" grunted Fergus.

"Well," said Nort, "I've suspected it all along, and now I know it. There's the Cap'n, for example. We didn't know we had a gold mine in the Cap'n, now, did we? But we had! Great thing, the Cap'n's story! Finest thing done in country journalism anywhere, at any time, I suppose."

I exchanged an amused glance with Anthy, and we both looked at the old Captain. As Nort talked the Captain grew more and more erect in his chair, wagged his head, and, finally, arising from his seat, took two or three steps down the room looking very grand. Nort went on talking, glancing at the old Captain out of the corner of his eye, and evidently enjoying himself hugely.

"Now, I say, we've got other gold mines here, if we only knew how to work 'em. There's David! Let's have a column from him—wise saws and modern instances. David will become the official Hempfield philosopher. And then there's Fergus——"

"Humph!" observed Fergus.

"There's Fergus. Everybody in town knows Fergus, and I'll stake my reputation that anything that Fergus writes over his own name will be read."

Nort was riding his highest horse.

"Miss Doane, let's announce it in big type this very week, something like this: 'The *Star* of Hempfield has arranged a new treat for its readers. We shall soon present a column containing the ripe observations of our esteemed printer, fellow citizen, and spotless Scotchman, Mr. Fergus MacGregor. We shall also have contributions in a philosophical vein by Mr. David Grayson, and a column by that paragon of country journalism'"—here he paused and looked solemnly at the old Captain, and then resumed—"'that paragon of country journalism, Mr. Norton Carr.'"

We all thought that Nort was joking, but he wasn't. He was in dead earnest. That afternoon he walked home with me down the wintry road. It was a cold, blustery day with a fine snow sifting through the air, but Nort's head was so hot with his plans that I am sure, if his feet were chilled, he never knew

it. He laboured hard with me to write something each week for the *Star*, and the upshot of the matter was that I began to contribute short paragraphs and bits of description and narrative which we headed

DAVID GRAYSON'S COLUMN

It was made up of the very simplest and commonest elements, mostly little scraps of news from my farm—the description of a calf drinking, the sound of pigeons in the hay loft. I told also about the various country odours in spring, peach leaves, strawberry leaves, and new hay, and of the curious music of the rain in the corn. I inquired what was the finest hour of the day in Hempfield, and tried to answer my own question. I put in a hundred and one inconsequential things that I love to observe and think about, and added here and there, for seasoning, a bit of common country philosophy. It was very enjoyable to do, and a number of people said they liked to read it, because I told them some of the things they often thought about, but had never been able to express.

Nort found Fergus far harder to influence

than he found me. A curious change had been going on in Fergus which I did not at first understand. At times he was more garrulous than ever I had known him to be, and at times he was a very sphinx for silence. It is a curious thing how people surprise us. In our vanity we begin to think we know them to the uttermost, and then one day, possibly by accident, possibly in a moment of emotion, a little secret door springs open in the smooth panel of their visible lives, and we see within a long, long corridor with other doors and passages opening away from it in every direction—the vast secret chambers of their lives.

I had some such experience with that prickly Scotchman, Fergus MacGregor. It began one evening when I found him alone by the office fire. He was sitting smoking his impossible pipe and gazing into the glowing open draft of the corpulent stove. He did not even look around when I came in, but reaching out one foot kicked a chair over toward me. Suddenly he fetched a big sigh, and said in a tone of voice I had not before heard:

"Night is the mither o' thoughts."

He relapsed into silence again. After some

moments he took his pipe out and remarked to the stove:

"Oaks fall when reeds stand."

"Fergus," I said, "you're cryptic to-night. What do you consider yourself, an oak or a reed?"

"Well, David, I'm the oak that falls, while the reed stands."

I tried to draw him out still further on this interesting point, but not another explanatory word would he say. It was the beginning, however, of a new understanding of Fergus.

A little later, that very evening, Anthy and her uncle came in for a moment on their way home from some call or entertainment, and not a minute behind them, Nort. I saw Fergus's eyes dwell a moment on Anthy and then return to his moody observation of the fire. And Anthy was well worth a second glance that evening. The sharp winter wind had touched her cheeks with an unaccustomed radiance, and had blown her hair, where the scarf did not quite protect it, wavily about her temples. She was in great spirits.

"Fergus," she cried out, "what do you mean sitting here all humped up over the fire on a wonderful night like this!"

Here Nort broke in:

"Fergus is thinking about what he will put into his issue of the *Star*."

"They're all my issues, so far's I can see," growled Fergus.

"But now, Fergus," persisted Nort, "if you were editing a column in the newspaper what would you put in it?"

Fergus began to liven up a little.

"Tell us, Fergus," said Anthy.

Fergus took his pipe out of his mouth and rubbed the bowl of it along his cheek, screwing up his face as though he were thinking hard. We all watched him. No one could ever tell quite where Fergus would break out.

"What is most interesting to you?" prompted Nort.

"That's easy," said Fergus, and turning in his chair he reached across to the shelf and produced his battered volume of "Tom Sawyer." This he opened gravely and began to read the passage in which Tom beguiles the other boys in the village to do his whitewashing for him:

"Tom appeared on the sidewalk with a bucket of whitewash and a long-handled brush. He surveyed the

fence, and all gladness left him and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit. Thirty yards of board fence nine feet high. Life seemed to him hollow and existence but a burden.

Fergus read it with a deliciously humorous Scotch twist in the words, a twist impossible to represent in print. Occasionally he would pause and bark two or three times, his excuse for laughter. When he had reached the end of the passage, Nort said:

"I've got it! This is the very thing: let's put it in the *Star*. Where's a pencil and paper? *Fergus MacGregor's Favourite Passage from 'Tom Sawyer.'* Everybody in town knows that Fergus likes 'Tom Sawyer.'"

"Humph!" said Fergus, but it was evident that he was not a little pleased. Do what he would, he could not help liking Nort.

"I know something that represents Fergus still better," said Anthy.

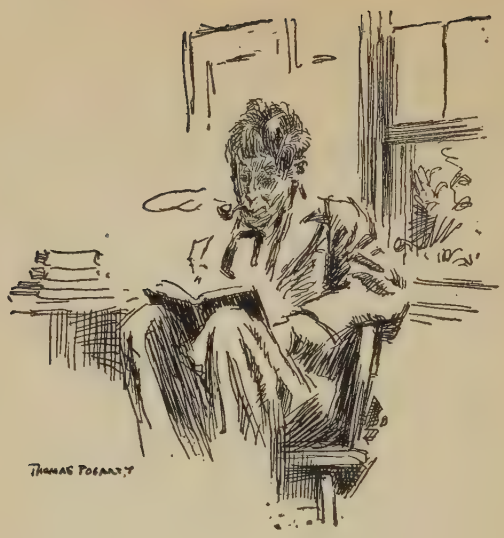
Fergus looked across at her, and then began thumbing his pipe.

"What's that?" asked Nort.

"'The Twa Dogs.' Isn't that your favourite poem, Fergus?"

"Whur'll you find a better one?" asked Fergus, putting his pipe back in his mouth.

"That's Number Two," said the irrepressible Nort. "We'll put that in some other issue headed '*Fergus MacGregor's Favourite Poem.*'"



CHAPTER XX

THE CELEBRATION

NOTHING, finally, continues long in this world. At moments of high happiness and grand endeavour we are tempted to think that the world is solid happiness all the way through. But in reality the interior of the planet of life is molten and the crust terribly thin: we never know at what moment an earthquake may rend what has seemed to us the indestructible foundations of our existence.

The *Star* had been wonderfully successful, and Nort had been going from glory to dazzling glory, having everything his own way, and coming, I have no doubt, to think himself something of an exception to the common lot of poor human nature. He was in the first bloom of his genius (you will yet hear from Norton Carr, mark my word), and like many another ardent young man he thought the world was made for him, not he for the world. He liked people, and he knew that people liked him—and presumed upon it. And more and more he loved to toss off his glittering ideas and his wonderful plans, enjoying the bedazzlement which they aroused and ready to laugh at those who were too easily taken in. At first he was willing to sit down and work hard to bring his dreams to pass, but he had never been trained to steady effort, and unless he was forced it was irksome to him. He liked to explain his ideas and let any one else work them out, or drop them. He was like that vagabond of birds, the cuckoo, always laying eggs in the nests of other birds, knowing with a sort of sardonic humour that if they *did* hatch the young birds would and could be nothing but cuckoos.

As spring advanced Nort grew still more undependable. It seemed to get into his very blood. I would catch him looking out of the open window of our office into the mass of lilac leaves, or lifting his chin to take in a full breath of the good outdoors, and when he whistled, and he was often whistling, the low monotonous note had a curious lift and stir in it. He was frequently moody, and when he did burst out it was almost never to Anthy. He seemed actually to avoid Anthy, and yet without any set purpose of doing so. And of all of us he liked best to talk with Fergus, who treated him very much as a she-bear treats her cub, with evidences of burly affection which usually left claw marks.

I could see that all this was getting to be very distressing to Anthy. Perhaps she felt that the pace the *Star* was setting was far too great to keep; perhaps she felt that too much rested upon the uncertain quantity which was Nort—and perhaps, down deep, she had begun to have a more than ordinary interest in Nort. She was not one of those women who are quickly awakened, and she was absorbed in her enterprise, and, besides, to all outward ap-

pearances, Nort was a mere tramp printer and her own employee.

One bright forenoon in April, one of those utterly perfect spring days in which April appears in the coquettish garb of June, I saw Nort suddenly start up from his work, seize his coat, and shoot out of the door. In the afternoon, as I was going homeward along the lanes and across the fields, I came upon him in a grove of young maple trees. He was lying flat on his back in the leaves, all flecked with sunshine, his arms opened wide, one leg lifted high over the other. He was looking up into the green wonder of the vegetation. Such a look of sheer pagan joy of life I have rarely seen on a human face. When he saw me he sprang to his feet.

"Isn't it wonderful—all of it?" he said. "Why, David, I could write poetry, if I knew how!"

"Or paint pictures—or carve statues, or compose music," I put in.

"Anything is possible on a day like this!"

"Except printing a country newspaper."

He laughed ruefully, threw back his head impatiently and utterly refused to discuss that subject.

I took the rascal home with me, to Harriet's delight, and he followed me around afterward, while I did my chores.

The next morning, just as he was starting for town, he began telling Harriet how much he had enjoyed coming to see us—so many times during the past months.

"I wish," he said, "there was some way of showing you and David how much I appreciate it."

Here he stopped abruptly and his eyes began to glow.

"I have it. A great idea! You're in it, Miss Grayson!"

Harriet stood watching his slight active figure until it quite disappeared beyond the hill. Then she came in, looking absent-minded, a very rare expression for her, and I even thought I heard her sigh softly.

"What's the matter, Harriet?"

"That boy! That perfectly irresponsible boy! He needs some one to look after him."

Nort's idea was not long in bearing fruit. Harriet found the letter in the mail box addressed to both of us in Nort's handwriting. She brought it in, tearing it open curiously.

"I can't *conceive*—addressed to both of us."

She finally opened it and produced a card neatly printed with these words:

Fergus MacGregor
and
Norton Carr
request the pleasure of
your company at dinner
Friday evening, April twenty-third,
at the office of
The Hempfield Star
to meet
Tom, Dick, and Old Harry
R. S. V. P.

"What in the world!" exclaimed Harriet.

It was as much of a surprise to Anthy and the old Captain as it was to us. As for Ed Smith, he had so far lost his breath trying to keep up with Nort that he no longer had the capacity for being surprised at anything.

I cannot attempt an adequate description of that evening's celebration. Though we did not know it at the time it brought us to the very climax and crisis of that period of our lives. It was the glorious end of an epoch in the history of the *Star* of Hempfield.

Nort and Fergus had cleaned out the back

room of the shop, and a table was set up in the middle of it with just chairs enough for our own company, including one stool upon which Tom, the cat, was intermittently induced to sit by Nort. Dick's cage was hung from the ceiling over the table, where for a time he seemed quite alive to the importance of the occasion, but soon went off to sleep on his perch with his head drawn down among his yellow feathers.

The meal itself came mostly by the hands of Joe Miller, coloured, of the Hempfield House, who smiled broadly during the entire evening, but the *pièce de résistance*, the crowning glory of the evening, was an enormous steak which Nort and Fergus, with much discussion and more perspiration, and not a few smudges and scratches, broiled over the coals in our office stove. I may say that in the effort to produce these coals the office was heated all the afternoon to such a temperature that it drove us all out. I shall not forget the sight of Nort coming in at the door carrying the triumphant steak, still in the broiler, with Fergus crouching and dodging along beside him, holding a part of an old press fly under it to catch any drippings. I remember the look on his glow-

ing face and the smile he wore! He let the steak slide out of the broiler, to Harriet's horror, upon the huge hotel platter.

"There!" he exclaimed.

We all cheered wildly, and Joe Miller, with a carving knife in one hand and a fork in the other, hovered behind, his black face one great smile.

Fergus was quite wonderfully dressed up for the occasion with a very tall collar and a red necktie, and cuffs that positively would not stay up, and his attempt to brush his hair had produced the most astounding storm effects. But he appeared happy, if uncomfortable. As for Harriet, I have not seen her look so young and pretty for years. It was altogether a little irregular and shocking to her, but she met it with a sort of fearful joy.

The old Captain was perfect. He was dressed in his very best clothes—his longest-tailed coat—and wore a flower in his buttonhole, and he told us the most surprising stories of his early life. He was also a very pattern of gallantry, and in several passages with Harriet decidedly got the worst of it.

How I love such moments—as perfect as anything in this life of ours; friends all about,

The old Captain was perfect. He was a very pattern of gallantry

and good comradeship, and jolly stories, and lively talk, and good things to eat. And surely never was there a finer evening for just such a celebration. The cool spring air coming in across the lilacs and heavy with the scent of them, the shaded lamp, the occasional friendly sounds from the street, and finally, and to the amazement of us all, the town clock striking twelve. What a beautiful and wonderful thing life is!

CHAPTER XXI

STARLIGHT

I SCARCELY know how he managed it —how does youth manage such things —but almost before I knew what was going on, and while the Captain and I were still in the tail-end of a discussion of the administration of William McKinley, and Harriet was putting on her wraps, Nort had gone out of the office with Anthy. We heard Nort laugh as they were going down the steps.

"Never mind," said the old Captain, "let 'em go."

A few minutes later Fergus disappeared by way of the back door which led from his room into the yard. I did not at

the time connect the two departures, did not, indeed, think of the matter at all, save to wonder vaguely why the dependable Fergus should be leaving his home, which was the printing-office, at that time of the night.

It was a wonderful night, starlit and very clear, with the cool, fresh air full of the sweet prescience of spring. It was still, too, in the town, and once a little outside the fields and hills and groves took upon themselves a haunting mystery and beauty.

So often and wistfully has my memory dwelt upon the incidents of that night that I seem now to live more vividly in the lives of Nort and Anthy—with Fergus crouching in the meadows behind—than I do in my own barren thoughts.

Exaltation of mood affected Nort and Anthy quite differently. It set Nort off, made him restless, eager, talkative, but it made Anthy the more silent. It glowed from her eyes and expressed itself in the odd tense little gesture she had—of one hand lifted to her breast.

"Most wonderful time that ever I had in my life," said Nort.

"It *was* fine," returned Anthy. Her low voice vibrated.

"It seems to me, Miss Doane, that it is only since I came to Hempfield that I have begun to live. I was only existing before: it seems to me now as though I could do anything."

He paused. When he spoke again it was in a deeper tone, and his voice shook:

"I feel to-night as though I could be great —and *good*."

She had never heard that tone before: she saw him in a new light, and suddenly began to tremble without knowing why. But she walked quietly at his side along the shadowy road. They seemed in a world all by themselves, with the wonderful stars above, and the fragrant night air all about them. At the corner where the sidewalk ends they came to the first outlook upon the open country. Anthy stopped suddenly and looked around her.

"Oh, isn't it beautiful," she whispered.

This time it was Nort who made no reply. They stood a moment side by side, and it was thus that Fergus, a hundred paces behind in the shadows of the trees, first saw them—with misery in his soul.

They walked on slowly again, feeling each other's presence with such poignant consciousness that neither dared speak. Thus they came to Anthy's gate: and there they paused a moment.

"Good-night," said Nort.

"Good-night," responded Anthy faintly.

She looked up at him with the starlight on her face. It seemed to him that he saw her for the first time. He had never really known her before. He was dizzily conscious of flashing lights and something in his throat that hurt him.

"Anthy," he said huskily, "you are the most beautiful woman in the world."

She still stood, close to him, looking up into his face. She tried to move, but could not.

"Anthy," he said again, with shaking voice, and stooping over kissed her upon her lips.

She uttered a little low cry and, turning quickly, with her hand lifted to her face, ran up the walk to the house.

"Anthy," he called after her—such a call as she will not forget to her dying day.

And she was gone.

Nort stood by the gate, clasping the wood until his fingers hurt him, in a wild tumult of emotion. And behind him in the shadows, not a hundred paces away, Fergus, with clenched hands.

CHAPTER XXII

FERGUS AND NORT

FERGUS MacGregor was approaching the supreme moment of his life. As I have said before, it was a long time before I began to understand that roseate Scotchman. His husk was so thick and prickly that one approached him at his peril. I knew that he was as hard as nails and as real as boiled cabbage; I knew, also, that just within his rough exterior there were unusual qualities of strength and warmth, and I had grown strangely to like him and trust him; but there were reaches

and depths in his character that I was long in discovering.

I remember his telling me with some pride that he was a skeptic in religion, "an infidel if ye like," and that the "Address to the Unco Guid," about expressed his views. He could also repeat "Holy Willie's Prayer" to perfection. But I soon found that he was an infidel in much the same terms that his forefathers had been Covenanters—a terribly orthodox infidel, if that can be imagined. Skepticism meant no mushy liberalism with him; it only meant that he had adopted a new creed, and that he would fight as hard for his skepticism as other men fight for their more positive beliefs. But if he had changed his religious views, the moral standards which lay beneath them like the primordial rocks had not been in the least shaken.

There remained something deep within him of the old spirit of clan loyalty. Anthy's father had almost brought him up; he had been in the office of the *Star* for more years than he cared to remember; he had watched Anthy through her unconscious and dreamy girlhood; had seen her blossom into youth and come to the full glory of womanhood. I never found

out how old he was, for he was one of those hard-knit, red-favoured men who live sometimes from the age of twenty-five to fifty with scarcely more evidences of change than a granite boulder. He thought himself ugly, and he was, indeed, rough, uncouth, and uneducated in the schools, though in many ways as thoroughly educated a man, if education means the ability to command instantly and for any purpose the full powers of one's mind and body, as one often finds.

I do not know to this day whether Fergus loved Anthy in the sense in which a man loves a woman. Certainly it was no selfish love, but rather a great passionate fidelity to one who, he thought, was infinitely above him, the sort of devotion which asks only to serve, and expects no reward. There are few such people in this world, and they usually get what they expect.

I saw afterward, as I did not see so clearly at the time, how faithfully, jealously, completely, Fergus had served and watched over Anthy, particularly since the death of her father. He lived in the poor back room of the printing-office, worked hard at absurdly low wages, had few pleasures in life beyond his

pipe and his beloved books—and watched over Anthy. He had seen, far more clearly than Anthy and Nort themselves had seen it, the growing attachment between them, had seen it with what misery of soul I can only guess.

He had begun by liking Nort in his rough way, partly because Nort had come friendless to our office and needed a friend, and partly because he could not resist Nort; and his knowledge of the true drift of affairs had not led him to hate Nort. But he saw with the clear eyes of perfect devotion just what Nort was—undisciplined, erratic, uncontrolled. He had himself felt Nort's irresistible charm and he dreaded the effect of it upon Anthy. Nort was likely to tire of Hempfield at any time, he might even tire of Anthy, having won her, and break her heart. Moreover, in Fergus's eyes, not Sir Galahad himself would have been good enough for Anthy.

It was not because Nort appeared penniless, not because he was a tramp printer, that Fergus began to set so indomitably against him, but because he was not a *man*. Fergus had that terrible sense of justice, duty, loyalty, that would have caused him to sacrifice his greatest friend to serve Anthy as quickly and

completely as he would have sacrificed himself.

Quite unknown to me, Fergus had been watching the situation for some time, and it was his anxiety which had caused his changeableness of mood. He was not a quick thinker, and, like many men of strong character, moved to his resolutions with geologic slowness—and geologic irresistibility. For a long time he debated in his own mind what he should do. He finally concluded to take the whole matter into his own hands. He would deal directly with Nort.

It was worse than he had expected. He had seen the episode in the starlight at the gate—it burned itself into his very soul—and he had seen Anthy running toward the house with her face hidden in her hands. To a certain extent he misconstrued this incident. He could not see what happened afterward: he could not see Anthy running up the dark stairway in her home, could not see her turn on the full light in her room and look into the mirror at her own glowing face, her own brilliant eyes. She had never before even seen herself! And Nort's words, the very tone and thrill of them—"You are the most beau-

tiful woman in the world"—singing themselves wildly within her, were changing the world for her. Through all the future years, she did not know it then, she was to see herself as some other person, the person who had sprung into glorious being when Nort had called her Anthy. She looked only once at her face—she could not bear more of it—and then threw herself on her bed, burying her burning cheeks in her pillow, and lay thus for a long, long time.

All of this Fergus could not know about, and it is possible that if he had known about it he would still have misinterpreted it. Like many an excellent older person he suspected that youth was not sufficient to its own problems.

Nort never knew, while he stood there at the gate looking up at the dark house into which Anthy had disappeared, how near he was to feeling Fergus's wiry hands upon his throat. But Fergus held himself in, his grim mind made up, considering how best he should do what he had to do.

I suppose life is tragic, or comic, or merely humdrum, as you happen to look at it. If you are old and sour, you will see little in the

rages of youth, they will appear to you excessively absurd and enormously distant. You will probably not recall that you yourself, in your time, were a moderately great fool, or, if you were not a fool, you have missed—— What have you *not* missed?

Nort could never remember exactly what he did next. He recalls rushing through shadowy roads, with the cool, sharp air of the night biting his hot face. He remembers standing somewhere on a hilltop and looking up at the wonderful blue bowl of the sky all lit with stars. He could remember talking aloud, but not what it was that he said, only that it came out of the vast tumult within him. From time to time he would see with incomparable vividness Anthy's face looking up at him, he would hear, actually *hear*, his own thick voice speaking; every minute detail of the moment, every sight, sound, odour, would pass before him in flashes of consciousness. He would live over the entire evening, as it seemed to him, in a moment of time. He did not know that the world could be so beautiful; he did not imagine that he himself was like that!

At its height emotion seems endless and

indestructible, but it is, in its very nature, brief and elusive—else men might die of it. Nort's mood began finally to quiet down, the impressions and memories of the night rushed less wildly through his mind. And suddenly—he said it came to him with a shock—he thought of the future. He stopped still in the road. He had been so intoxicated with the experiences he had just passed through that it had actually never occurred to him what they might mean; and according to Nort's temperament the new vision instantly swallowed up the old, and, as it was cooler and clearer, seemed even more wonderful. He remembered saying very deliberately and aloud:

"I must work for Anthy all my life."

It came to him as a very wonderful thing that he could do this! Why, he could do anything for her: he could slave and dig and die! He could be *great* for her—and let no one else know how great he was! He could win a battle, he could command men, he could write the greatest book in the world, and no one should know it but Anthy! Oh, youth, youth!

His mind again became inordinately ac-

tive: the whole wonderful future opened before him. He began to plan a thousand things that he might do. He would imagine himself walking home with Anthy, just as he had done that night, thrilling with the thought of her at his side, and he would be telling her his plans, and always she would be looking up into his face just as she had been doing at that last moment!

All these things seem long in the telling —and they lasted for ages in Nort's soul— but as a matter of fact they were brief enough in time. Fergus, stumbling along behind in the cold road, his hard-set spirit suffering dumbly, was only waiting the choice of a moment to lay his hand upon Nort's shoulder. And thus the two of them came, by no forethought, to the little hill just north of my farm, and I entered for a moment, all unconsciously, upon the comedy, or the tragedy, of that historic night.

I can't tell exactly what time it was, but I had been asleep for some time when I heard knocking on the outer door. As I started up in bed I heard some one calling my name, "David! David!" I ran downstairs quickly, wondering why Harriet was not before me,

for she is a light sleeper. As I opened the door I saw a man on the porch.

"David!"

"Nort! What are you doing here at this time of the night?"

"Let me come in!" he said in a tense voice. "I've got something I must tell you."

I got him into my study and shut the door so that Harriet would not be disturbed. Then I struck a light and looked at Nort. His face was uncommonly pale; but his eyes, usually blue and smiling, were black with excitement. I could not fathom it at all. I had seen him before in a mood of exaltation, but nothing like this.

"David," said he, "I'm going to write a novel—a great novel."

He paused and looked at me with tremendous seriousness. The whole thing struck me all at once, partly in revulsion from the alarm I had felt when he first came in, as being the most absurd and humorous proceeding I had ever known. I laughed outright.

"Is this what you came to tell me at three o'clock in the morning?"

But Nort's mood was beyond ridicule. He did not seem to notice my laughter at

all, but plunged at once into an account, a more or less jumbled account I am forced to admit, of all the things he would put into his novel. As nearly as I could make out he proposed to leave nothing out, nothing whatever that was in any way related to American life—politics, religion, business, love, art, city life, country life—everything. He didn't seem to be quite sure yet whether he could get it all into one large volume, like one of Scott's novels, or whether he would make a trilogy of volumes, like Frank Norris, or a whole *comédie humaine* after the manner of Balzac. I gathered that it was not only to be the great American novel, but the greatest that would ever be written.

It was so preposterous, so extraordinary! But it was Nort. I can see him now, vividly, pacing up and down the room, head thrown back, hair flying wild, telling me of his visions. I slipped into my overcoat, for it was cold, and still he talked on, and at moments I actually thought the rascal had lost control of himself. This impression was increased by a startling incident which was wholly unexplainable to me at the time. Just as Nort was walking down the study toward the east window he

stopped suddenly, looked around at me, and said in a low voice:

"David, I saw a face looking in at that window."

I followed his glance quickly, but could see nothing.

"You're dreaming, Nort," said I.

"No, I saw it."

"See here, Nort," I said, "this is not reasonable. I want you to stop talking and go to bed. Can't you see how foolish it is?"

For the first time Nort laughed his old laugh.

"I suppose, David, it is—but it seems to me I never lived before to-night."

He seemed on the point of telling me something more. I wish he had, though it probably would not have changed the course of events which followed.

"Well," he said, "I'll go home and be decent. I never thought until this moment what you must think of me for routing you out in the middle of the night! And Harriet, too! What will she say?"

He looked at me ruefully, whimsically. It was just as he had said: he had never thought of it.

"David, I saw a face looking in at that window"

"David, I'm awfully sorry and ashamed of myself. I'm a selfish devil."

What a boy he was: and how could any one hold a grudge against him! He was now all contrition, feared he'd wake up Harriet, and promised to creep out without making a sound. I asked him to stay with us, but he insisted that he couldn't, that he must get home. So he opened the door of the study, and tiptoed with exaggerated caution down the hall. At the door he paused and said in a whisper:

"David, there *was* some one at that window."

"Nonsense."

"Well, good-night."

"Good-night, Nort, and God bless you."

He closed the door with infinite caution, and I thought I had seen the last of him, but a moment later he stuck his head in again.

"David," he said in a stage whisper, "the great trouble is, I can't think of any heroine, any really *great* heroine, for my novel that isn't exactly like Anthy——"

"Nort, get out!" I laughed, not catching the significance of his remark until after he had gone.

"Well, good-night, anyhow, David," he said, "or good-morning. You're a downright good fellow, David."

And good morning it was: for when Nort went down the steps the dawn was already breaking. As I went upstairs I heard Harriet, in a frightened whisper:

"What in the world is the matter, David?"

But I refused to explain, at least until morning.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BATTLE

IT WAS gray dawn, with a reddening sky in the east, when Nort walked up the town road. The fire within him had somewhat died down, and he began to feel tired and, yes, hungry. At the brook at the foot of the hill he stopped and threw himself down on the stones to drink, and as he lifted his head he looked at himself curiously in the pool. The robins were beginning to sing, and all the world was very still and beautiful.

When he got up Fergus touched him on his shoulder. He was startled, and glanced around

suddenly, and the two men stood for a moment looking into each other's eyes. And Nort knew as well as though some one had told him, that it had come to an unescapable issue between him and this grim Scotchman.

"Well, Fergus, where did you drop from?"

He tried to carry it off jauntily: he had always played with Fergus.

"I've been waitin' fer ye," said Fergus. "I want ye to come in the wood wi' me. I have a bone to pick wi' ye."

Fergus seemed perfectly cool; whatever agitation he felt showed itself only in the increasing Scotchiness of his speech.

Nort objected faintly, but was borne along by a will stronger than his own. They stepped into the woods and walked silently side by side until they came to an opening near the edge of a field. Here there were beech trees with spaces around them, and the ground was softly clad in new green bracken and carpeted with leaves. Nort felt a kind of cold horror which he could not understand.

"Fergus," he said, again trying to speak lightly, "it was you I saw looking in at David's window."

"It was," said Fergus. "I couldna let ye escape me."

They had now paused, and in spite of himself Nort was facing Fergus.

"We must ha' it oot between us, Nort," said Fergus.

"What do you mean? I don't understand."

"Yes, ye do."

Nort looked up at him suddenly.

"Anthy?"

"You've said it; ye ain't fit fer her, an' ye know it."

Nort turned deadly pale.

"Fergus," he said, "do you—have you——"

"I promised Anthy's father I'd look after her, an' I wull."

"But, Fergus, what have you got against me? I thought we were friends."

"What's friendship to do wi' it? Ye ain't good enough for Anthy: an' I wull na' ha' ye breakin' her heart. Who are ye that ye should be lookin' upon a girl like that?"

Fergus's voice was shaking with emotion.

"Well, I know I'm not good enough, Fergus, you're right about that. No one is, I think. But I—I love her, Fergus."

"Ye love her: ye think ye do: next week ye'll think ye don't."

At this a flame of swift anger swept over Nort.

"If I love her and she loves me, who else has got anything to say about it I'd like to know?"

"Wull, I have," said Fergus grimly.

Nort laughed, a nervous, fevered laugh, and threw out his arms in a gesture of impatience.

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Go away," said Fergus, "go away and let her alone. Go back whur ye come from, an' break no hearts."

Although the words were gruff and short, there was a world of pleading in them, too. Fergus had no desire to hurt Nort, but he wanted to get him away forever from Hempfield. It was only Anthy that he had in mind. He must save Anthy. Nort felt this note of appeal, and answered in kind:

"I can't do it, Fergus, and you have no right to ask me. If Anthy tells me to go, I will go. It is between us. Can't you see it?"

"Wull," said Fergus, hopelessly, "you an' me must ha' it oot."

With this, Fergus turned about and began to take off his coat. Nort remembered long afterward the look of Fergus deliberately

taking off his coat—his angular, bony form, his wiry, freckled neck, his rough, red hair, his loose sleeves held up by gayly embroidered armlets, the trousers bagging in extremity at his knees. Even in that moment he felt a curious deep sense of pity, pity mingled with understanding, sweep over him. He had come some distance in the few short hours since Anthy's face had looked up into his.

Fergus laid his coat and hat at the trunk of a beech tree and began slowly to roll up his sleeves.

"Will ye fight wi' yer coat on or off?"

Nort suddenly laughed aloud. It was unbelievable, ridiculous! Why, it was uncivilized! It simply wasn't done in the world he had known.

Nort had never in his life been held down to an irrevocable law or principle, never been confronted by an unescapable fact of life. Some men go through their whole lives that way. He had never met anything from which there was not some easy, safe, pleasant, polite way out—his wit, his family connections, his money. But now he was looking into the implacable, steel-blue eyes of Fergus MacGregor.

"But, Fergus," he said, "I don't want to fight. I like you."

"There's them that *has* to fight," responded Fergus.

"I never fought anybody in my life," said Nort, as though partly to himself.

"That may be the trouble wi' ye."

Fergus continued, like some implacable fate, getting ready. He was now hitching up his belt.

Every artistic nature sooner or later meets some such irretrievable human experience. It asks only to see life, to look on, to enjoy. But one day this artistic nature makes the astonishing discovery that nature plays no favourites, that life is, after all, horribly concrete, democratic, little given to polite discrimination, and it gets itself suddenly taken seriously, literally, and dragged by the heels into the grime and common coarseness of things.

Nort was still inclined to argue, for it did not seem real to him.

"It won't prove anything, Fergus, fighting never does."

"'Fraid, are ye?"

"Yes," said Nort, "horribly."

And yet at the very moment that Nort was saying that he was horribly afraid, and he

spoke the literal truth, a very strange procession of thoughts was passing swiftly through the back of his mind. He was somehow standing aside and seeing himself as he was at that moment, seeing, indeed, every detail of the scene before him like a picture, every tree and leaf, the carpet of leaves and bracken, seeing Fergus moving about. Yes, and he was laughing, away back there, at the picture he saw, and wondering at it, and thrilling over it, at the very moment that he was so horribly afraid. He was even speculating, back there, a little cynically, whether he, Nort, would finally stay to fight or run away. He actually did not know!

Fergus's dull, direct, geologic mind could not possibly have imagined what was passing nimbly behind those frightened, boyish blue eyes. Fergus was moving straight ahead in the path he had planned, and, on the whole, placidly. What a blessing in this world is a reasonable amount of dulness!

Having prepared himself, Fergus now stepped forward. Nort stood perfectly still, his arms hanging slack at his sides, his face as pale as marble, his eyes widening as Fergus approached.

"I can't see any reason for fighting," he was saying. "Why should you fight me?"

"Wull, we needna fight—if ye'll go away."

For one immense moment Nort saw himself running away, and with an incredible inner sense of relief and comfort. He wanted to run, intended to run, but somehow he could not. He was afraid to fight, but somehow he was still more afraid to run. And then, with a blinding flash he thought of Anthy. What would she say if she saw him running?

At that moment Fergus struck him lightly on the cheek.

It was like an electric shock to Nort. He stiffened in every muscle, red flashes passed before his eyes, his throat twisted hard and dry, and the tears came up to his eyes. In another moment he was grappling with Fergus, striking wildly, blindly. And he was, curiously, no longer confused. An incredible clearness of purpose swept over him. This purpose was to *kill* Fergus. There was to be no longer any foolery about it; he was going to kill him.

If Fergus had known what Nort was thinking at that moment he would have been horrified and shocked beyond measure. Fergus had not the most distant intent of injuring Nort seriously. He did not even hate him,

but, I fully believe, really loved him, and was going through this disagreeable business quite coldly. As he received Nort's impetuous assault, he smiled with a sort of high exultation and found words to remark:

"The mair haste, Nort, the waur speed."

With that he hit out squarely with his wiry, muscular arm—just once—and Nort went down in the bracken and lay quite still.

Fergus stood looking down at him: the silent face upturned, very white, very boyish, very beautiful, the soft hair tumbling about his temples, the lax arms spread out among the leaves. And all around the still woods, and quiet fields, and the robins singing, and the sun coming up over the hill.

As Fergus looked down his breast began to heave and the tears came into his eyes.

"The bonnie, bonnie lad," he said; "he wadna run awa'."

Presently Nort stirred uneasily.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Come, now," said Fergus tenderly, "we'll get down ta the brook."

With one arm around him, Fergus helped him through the woods, and knelt beside him while he dashed the cold water over his face and head.

"I hit ye hard," said Fergus, "and it's likely yer eye'll be blackened."

Nort sat down with his back to a tree trunk. He was sick and dizzy. It seemed to him that the thing he wanted most in all the world was to be left alone.

"I'm going away, Fergus. Leave me here. I shall not go back to Hempfield."

Fergus offered no excuses, suggested no change in plan. It was working out exactly as he intended: he was sorry for Nort, but this was his duty. He made Nort as comfortable as he could, and then set off toward town. As he proceeded, he stepped faster and faster. He began to feel a curious exaltation of spirit. It was the greatest moment of his whole life. If you had seen him at that moment, with his head lifted high, you would scarcely have known him. As the town came into view, with the eastern sun upon it, Fergus burst out in a voice as wild and harsh as a bagpipe:

"Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha will fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!"

For that which followed I make no excuse, nor think I need to, but I must tell it, for it is a part of the history of Hempfield and of the life of Fergus MacGregor. Ours is a temperance town, and Fergus MacGregor a temperate man; but that morning Fergus was seen going over the hill beyond the town, unsteady in the legs, and still singing. He did not appear at the office of the *Star* all that day.

As for Nort, he lay for a long time there at the foot of the beech tree, miserably sick in body and soul—dozing off from time to time, and trying to think, dumbly, what was left to him in the world. He was as deep in the depths that morning as he had been high in the heavens the evening before.

CHAPTER XXIV

TWO LETTERS

I CAN imagine just how Nort looked, sitting in the bare room of the Bedlow Hotel of Hewlett, biting the end of his pen and struggling furiously with his letter to Anthy. In one moment he would let himself go the limit: "My dearest Anthy, I shall never see you again, and I can therefore tell you with the more freedom of my undying love——" and at the next moment he would hold himself to the strictest restraint: "My dear Miss Doane" or "Dear Miss Doane."

Half the letters he wrote were too long, or too wild, or too passionate, and the other half were too short or too cold. Before he got through, the table and floor all about him were drifted white with torn scraps of his correspondence.

His face was pale and his hair was rumpled. For almost the first time in his life he was in such deadly earnest, so altogether miserable, that he could not even stand aside and see himself with any degree of interest or satisfaction. This was the real thing.

He had firmly made up his mind as to his course. He would no longer think and talk about doing something great and heroic for Anthy. He would really do it. And he had settled upon quite the most heroic thing he could think of—this extraordinary young man—and this was to leave Hempfield, and to see no more of Anthy. Fergus was undoubtedly right. He was not worthy of Anthy, and his presence and his love would be a hindrance rather than a help to her. Whatever Nort did in those days he did to the utter extremity. And this was the letter he finally sent:

My Dear Miss Doane:

I am hopelessly unfortunate in everything I do. I do nothing but blunder. I hope you will not think ill of me.

Fergus is right. In leaving Hempfield, not to return, I am leaving everything in the world that means anything to me. I hope you will at least set this down to the credit of

NORTON CARR.

I was in the office of the *Star* when Nort's letter arrived. I saw Anthy pause a moment, standing very still by her desk. I saw her open the letter slowly, and then, after reading it, hold it hard in her hand, which she unconsciously lifted to her breast. I saw her turn and walk out of the office, a curious rapt expression upon her face.

As she entered the familiar hallway of her home, she told me afterward, everything seemed strange to her and terribly lonely. A day's time had changed the aspect of the world. She sat down in the study at the little desk where she had found solace so often in writing letters to Mr. Lincoln. But she was not thinking now of writing any such letter: indeed, the door had already closed upon this phase of her imaginative life, as it had closed on other and earlier phases. She never wrote another letter to Mr. Lincoln.

She was not outwardly excited, nor did she tear up a single sheet of notepaper, nor

give any attention to the form of address. Her letter was exactly like herself—simple, direct, and straight out of her heart. She had no need of making any changes, for this was all she had to say:

DEAR NORT:

Why have you gone away from Hempfield, and where are you? Just at the moment I found you, and found myself, you have gone away. Is it anything I have done, or have not done? It seems to me, as I look back, that I have been fast asleep all the years, until last night when you wakened me. I know I am awake, because everything I see to-day is changed from what it was yesterday; everything is more beautiful and nobler—and sadder. When I went down this morning I seemed to see a new Hempfield. I loved it even more than I loved the old Hempfield, and as I met the children on their way to school I had a new feeling for them, too. They seemed very dear to me.

I did not find you at the office, but my heart kept saying to me, "Nort will soon be here. . . . In a moment Nort will be coming in." Whenever I heard a step on the porch I said, "It is surely Nort," but you did not come. I think the office never seemed so wonderful to me as it did to-day, for the thought that you had been there, and would be there again. Everything reminded me of you, of the way you looked, and of what you did, and how your voice sounded.

And then your letter came. Why have you gone away from Hempfield? I could not make it any plainer

last night, Nort. I did not understand it fully myself, until afterward. Don't you see? I have nothing to give that is not yours for the asking. Come back, for I love you, Nort.

ANTHY.

This letter, which I did not know about until long afterward, was never sent, for Anthy had no way of addressing it.

That evening, rereading Nort's letter, she said aloud:

"What does he mean by saying Fergus is right? What has Fergus to do with it? Where *is* Fergus?"

CHAPTER XXV

THE FLYING-MACHINE

IF IT had not been for a surprising and amusing event which somewhat relieved the depression in the office of the *Star* of Hempfield, the following weeks would certainly have been among the most dismal of my life.

All the elasticity and interest and illusion seemed to have departed from us when Nort disappeared. Every one, except the old Captain, who was like a raging lion, was constrained and mysterious. It would have been amusing if it had not been so serious. Each of us was nursing a mystery, each was speculating, suspicious.

The only one of us who seemed to get any satisfaction out of the situation was Ed Smith. I think he was unaffectedly glad that Nort was gone. It left the field clear for him, and on the Saturday night after Nort left, Ed put on his hat just as Anthy was leaving the office and quite casually walked home with her. He ran on exactly as he had always done—chat about the business, and town gossip, which always gravitated toward the personal and intimate, and, finally, if there was half an opportunity, descended to the little soft jokes and purrings of sentimentality. He followed Anthy up the steps of her home, and stood, hat in hand, still talking, and half expecting to be invited in to supper. He did observe that she was silent—but then she was never very talkative. He saw nothing in her face, nothing in her eye, that he had not seen before.

But to Anthy, Ed Smith appeared in a wholly new light. Through all the experiences and turmoil in the office of the *Star* Ed had not changed in the least, and never would change. He was the sort of person, and the world is full of them, who is made all of a piece and once for all, who is not changed by contact with life, and who, if he possesses any

marks of personality at all, takes on in time a somewhat comical aspect. One comes to grin when he sees him wandering among immortal events with such perfect aplomb, such unchangeable satisfaction. As Anthy looked now at Ed Smith, it seemed to her that she had travelled an immeasurable distance since she had left college, since she took hold of the *Star*, since she first knew Ed Smith and had even been mildly interested in having him call upon her. She saw everything about her life, the career of the old Captain, the recent events in the history of the *Star*, with incredible clearness. Everything before had been hazy, unreal, dreamlike.

Fergus was by turns depressed and exultant, extremely silent or extremely loquacious (for him). Anthy felt certain that he had some knowledge concerning Nort that he was concealing, but she shrank curiously from asking him.

It was in this moment of strain and depression that Hempfield passed through one of its most notable experiences, and the old Captain established himself still more firmly upon the pinnacle of his faith in what he loved to call "immutable laws."

Imagine what it must have meant to a tranquil old village, settled in its habits, with a due sense of its own dignity and of the proprieties of life, unaccustomed to surprises of any kind, to behold, upon looking up into the sky on a pleasant spring afternoon, a sight which not even the oldest inhabitant, not even the oldest hills, had ever beheld, to wit, a flying-machine soaring through the air. With the sunlight flashing upon its wings it was as beautiful and light as some great bird, and it purred as it flew like a live thing.

All Hempfield ran into the streets and opened its mouth to the heavens. Even old Mrs. Dana, who could not leave her chair, threw open the window and craned her head outward to catch a glimpse of the miracle. Marvel of marvels, the flyer circled gracefully in two great spirals above the town, and then disappeared across the hills toward Hewlett. We held our breath until we could not even see the black speck in the sky, and then we all began to talk at once. We told one another in detail about our impressions and emotions. We described our feeling when we first saw the wonder, we told exactly what we were doing and thinking about, we explained what we said

to George Andrews, and how comical Ned Boston looked.

It was Joe Crane, the liveryman, who rushed into the office of the *Star* with the great news. In the simplicity and credulity of our faith we all turned out instantly to see the wonder in the sky, all except the old Captain. The old Captain was deep in the preparation of an editorial demolishing the Democratic party, and expressing his undying allegiance to the high protective tariff. When Joe Crane stuck his head in at the door, he merely glanced around with an aspect of large compassion.

Had he not, again and again in the columns of the *Star*, proved the utter absurdity of attempting to fly? Had he not shown that human flight was contrary, not only to immutable natural laws, but to the moral law as well? For over five thousand years men had lived upon this planet, and if the Creator had intended his children to fly, would he not have provided wings for them?

It did not shake the old Captain in the least when accounts of flying-machines—with pictures—began to appear in the newspapers and magazines. He passed grandly over them

with a snort. "Toys!" "Mere circus tricks to take in fools!" And if pressed a little too hard, and there were those who delighted in slyly prodding the Captain with innocent remarks about flying-machines, until it had become not a little of a town joke, he would clear the air with an explosive "Fudge!" and go calmly about his business.

When the supreme test came, and we cred-

"Toys!" "Mere circus tricks to take in fools!"

ulous ones all rushed out of the office, and craned our necks, and searched the ancient sky for the miracle, the old Captain stood staunchly by his faith. It couldn't be so, therefore it wasn't—a doctrine which, I am convinced, leads to much satisfaction and comfort in this world. The old Captain was, upon the whole, a happy man.

The *Star*, therefore, remained oblivious to the most interesting event that had taken place in Hempfield for many a day.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

NEVERTHELESS, the flying-machine episode played its part in the history of the *Star*. Facts are like that. We refuse quite disdainfully to recognize them, even crying "Fudge!" and "Nonsense!" and decline to put them in the *Star*, or the *Sun*, or the *World*, or even in the sober *Journal of the Society for the Enlargement of Human Heads*, but they don't mind. They circle around us, with the sunshine flashing on their wings, and all the simple and credulous people gaping up

at them, and they don't in the least care for our excellent platforms, constitutions, and Bibles.

It was the flying-machine incident which was the immediate cause of the return of Norton Carr. It was foreordained and likewise predestined that he should return, but there had to be some proximate event. And what better than a wandering flying-machine?

It was on a Sunday in May, such a perfect still morning as seems to come only at that moment of the spring, and upon Sunday. I was sitting here at my desk at the open window, busily writing. I could feel the warm, sweet air of spring blowing in, I could hear the pleasant, subdued noises from the barnyard, and by leaning just a little back I could see the hens lazily fluffing their feathers in the sunny doorway of the barn. I love such mornings.

The tender new shoots of the Virginia creeper were uncurling themselves at the window ledge and feeling their way upward toward freedom—and Nort put his head in among them.

"Hello, David!"

Though I had just been thinking of him, the sound of his voice startled me. I looked

around and saw him smiling very much in his old way.

"Nort, you rascal!" said I.

"David," he said, "I couldn't stay away another minute. I had to know what the old Captain said and did when the flying-machine came to Hempfield."

"I couldn't stay away another minute. I had to know what the old Captain said and did when the flying-machine came to Hempfield"

"Is that all you came back for?"

"May I come in?" And with that he climbed in at the window. I took him by both his shoulders and looked him in the eye. I had a curious sense of gladness in having him once more under my hand.

"You look thin, Nort, but I haven't any pity or sympathy for you. What have you been up to now?"

We both forgot all about the flying-machine.

"Well, David," said he, "I've been finding out some things I didn't know before—some things I can't do."

He was in a mood wholly unfamiliar to me, a sort of restrained, sad, philosophical mood.

"You know," he continued, "I had a great idea for a novel——"

He paused and looked up at me, smiling rather sheepishly.

"Well, I started it——"

"You have!"

"Yes, I got the first two paragraphs written. And there I stuck. You see I didn't know where to get hold; and then I thought I'd jump right into the middle of the action, where it was hottest and most interesting—but I found that my hero insisted on explain-

ing everything to the heroine, and wouldn't *do* anything, and then, when I tried to think how I should have it all come out, I found it didn't have any end, either. I leave it to you, David, how any man is going to write a novel which he can neither get into nor get out of?"

His face wore such a rueful, humorous look that I laughed aloud.

"It looks funny, I know," he said, "but it's really no laughing matter. It seems to me I'm a complete fizzle."

"At twenty-five, Nort! And all this beautiful world around you! Why, you've only to reach out your hand and take what you want."

I shall never forget the look on Nort's face as he leaned forward in his chair, nor the words that seemed to be wrung out of his very soul:

"That's all right as philosophy, David, but I—want—Anthy."

I suppose I had known it all along, and should not have been surprised or pained, and yet it was a moment before I could reply.

"Take her then, Nort," I said, "if you're big enough. But you can't steal her, as they once stole their women; and you can't buy her, as they do still."

Nort looked at me steadily.

"How, then?"

"You've got to win her, earn her. She's as able to take care of herself as you are."

"I guess it's hopeless enough. There isn't much chance that a girl like Anthy will see anything in a perfectly useless chap like me."

We sat for some time silent, Nort there in the chair at the end of the table, I here by the window, and the warm air of spring coming in laden with the heavy sweet odour of lilac blossoms. And I had a feeling at the moment as though my hand were upon the destinies of two lives.

I don't know yet quite why I did it, but I leaned over presently and opened the drawer in my desk where I keep my greatest treasures, and took out a small package of letters. It was my prize possession, the knowledge I had of the deep things in Anthy's life, a possession that I had never thought I could share with any one, and yet at that moment it seemed to me I wanted most of all to have Nort know with what a high and precious thing he was dealing—the noble heart of a good woman.

So I gave him a glimpse of the Anthy I knew, told him about the secret post-office

box behind the portrait of Lincoln in the study of her father's home, and of the letters she wrote and posted there. Then I opened one of the letters and handed it to him. I watched him as he read it, his hand trembling just a little. At last he looked up at me—with his bare soul in his eyes. He got up slowly from his chair and looked all about him, and then he said in a low voice, as if to himself:

"She was in here once, in this room, in this chair."

I have never been quite sure what Nort's mental processes were at that moment, but at least they were swift, and as terribly serious as only youth knows how to be. And absurd? Probably.

"David," he said, "I'm going away."

"Going away? Why?"

"David," said he, "I don't suppose there was ever in this world such a great character as Anthy—I mean such a *truly* great character."

He paused, looking at me intensely. If I had known that the next moment was to be my last I should still have laughed, laughed irresistibly. It was the moment when the high mood became unbearable. Moreover,

I had a sudden vision of Anthy herself, in her long gingham apron, going sensibly, cheerfully, about the printing-office, a stick of type in her hand, and, very likely, a smudge of printer's ink on her nose! Why do such visions smite us at our most solemn moments? Nort was taken aback at my laughter, and evidently provoked.

"I couldn't help it, Nort," I said. "I wonder if Anthy herself wouldn't laugh if she were to hear you say such things."

"That's so," said Nort. "She *would*. I've never known any one, man or woman, who had such a keen sense of humour as Anthy has."

"Sensible, too, Nort——"

"Sensible!" he exclaimed. "I should rather say so! I have never seen any one in my life who was as sensible—I mean *sound* and *wise* —as Anthy is."

Two months before, Nort himself would have been the first to laugh at such a situation as this: he would have laughed at himself, at me, and even at Anthy, but now he was in no such mood. I prize the memory of that moment; it was one of those rare times in life when it is given us to see a human spirit at

the moment of its greatest truth, simplicity, passion. And is it not a worthy moment when everything that is selfish in a human heart is consumed in the white heat of a great emotion?

Toward noon, when Harriet came in, greatly astonished to find a visitor with me, Nort quite shocked her by jumping up from his chair and seizing her by both hands.

"I'm terribly glad to see you, Miss Grayson," he said.

During dinner he seemed unable to tell whether he was eating chicken or pie, and no sooner were we through than he insisted upon hurrying away. He pledged me to secrecy concerning his whereabouts, but left his address.

CHAPTER XXVII

FERGUS MACGREGOR GOES TO THE HILLS

I THINK of no act in all the drama of the *Star* of Hempfield with greater affection, return in memory to none with deeper pleasure, than that which now opened upon the narrow stage of our village life. It centred around Nort and Anthy, of course, but it began with the old Captain, and about a week after Nort's visit at the farm.

The old Captain was sick in bed with one of his periodical "attacks." The old Captain was a man of great robustity and activity of both body and mind, and he made no docile invalid. At one moment he seemed to be greatly depressed, groaned a good deal, and

considered that he had not long to live; but at the next moment he would become impatient, and want to be up immediately and save the nation from the ravages of the Democratic party. I went over to see him on the second day of his illness, and the first thing he said when I came in was this:

"Where's Nort? I'd like to know what's become of the boy. I never thought he'd leave Hempfield without at least saying goodbye. It isn't like him."

In writing to Nort that night, I told him of my visit to the old Captain and what the Captain said, and on the second morning, when I walked into the office of the *Star*, what was my astonishment to see Nort down on his knees tinkering the gasoline engine.

Fergus was sitting stiffly on his stool, with his old green shade over his eyes. I learned afterward the exact circumstances of the meeting between the two men. Nort had walked in quite as usual, and hung his coat on the customary hook.

"Hello, Fergus!" he said, also quite as usual.

Fergus looked around at him, and said nothing at all. Nort walked over to the

stone, took up a stickful of type, and began to distribute it in the cases. Presently he looked around at Fergus with a broad smile on his face.

"Fergus, where's the fatted calf?"

"Humph!" remarked Fergus.

When Nort got down for another take of the type, Fergus observed to the general atmosphere:

"The old engine's out of order."

Nort stepped impulsively toward Fergus's case, and said with wistful affection in his voice:

"I knew, Fergus, that you'd kill the fatted calf for me!"

"Humph!" observed Fergus.

And that was why I found Nort bending over the engine when I came in, whistling quite in his old way. The moment he saw me, he forestalled any remark by inquiring:

"How's the Cap'n to-day?"

Anthy did not come to the office at all that morning, and toward noon I saw Nort rummaging among the exchanges and, having found what he wanted, he put on his hat and went out. He walked straight up the street to the homestead of the Doanes—his legs

shaking under him. At the gate he paused and looked up, seriously considered running away, and went in and knocked at the door.

By some fortunate circumstance Anthy had seen him at the gate, and now came to the door quite calmly.

"How's the Captain?" asked Nort, controlling his voice with difficulty. "David wrote me that he was sick. I thought I might cheer him up."

"Won't you come in?"

At that moment the old Captain's voice was heard from upstairs, booming vigorously:

"Is that Nort? Come up, Nort!"

Anthy smiled. She was now perfectly self-possessed, and it was Nort, the assured, the self-confident, who had become hopelessly awkward and uncertain.

"Come up, Nort!" called the old Captain.

When he entered the bedroom, the old Captain was propped up on the pillows, his thick white hair brushed back from his noble head. He was evidently very much better.

"Captain," said Nort, instantly, before the old Captain had a moment to express his surprise, "have you seen the Sterling *Democrat* this week?"

"No," said the Captain, starting up in bed. "What's that man Kendrick been doing now?"

"Listen to this," said Nort, pulling the paper out of his pocket and opening it with a vast simulation of excitement, and reading the heading aloud:

"*Where was Captain Doane when the flying-machine visited Hempfield?*"

"Why, the scoundrel!" exclaimed the old Captain, this time sitting straight up in bed, "the arrant scoundrel!"

As Nort read the paragraph the old Captain sank back on the pillows, and when it was over he remarked in a tone of broad tolerance:

"Nort, what can you expect of a Democrat, anyway?"

He lay musing for a minute or two, and then called out in a loud voice:

"Anthy, I'm going to get up."

The old war horse had sniffed the breeze of battle. When Nort went out, he saw nothing of Anthy.

Never were there such puzzling days as those which followed. To all outward appearance the life in the office of the *Star* had

been restored to its former humdrum. The incident of Nort's disappearance was as if it had not happened. The business of printing a country newspaper proceeded with the utmost decorum. And yet there was a difference —a difference in Nort. He was in a mood unlike anything we had seen before. He was much less boyish, more dignified, dignified at times to the point of being almost amusing. Once or twice he thoughtlessly broke out with some remark that suggested his old enthusiasm—but caught himself instantly. Also, he had very little to say to Anthy, did not once offer to walk home with her, and seemed to be most friendly of all with the old Captain. Also, I found that he was often in the office at night, sometimes writing furiously, and sometimes reading from a big solid book—which he seemed so unwilling for us to see that he carried it home with him every night.

I was greatly puzzled, but not more puzzled and disturbed than Anthy was. To her simple, direct nature Nort's moods were inexplicable; and after what had happened, his mysterious attitude toward her troubled and hurt her deeply. Two or three times when we happened to be alone together I felt cer-

tain that she was leading up to the subject, and, finally, one evening when I had gone out with the old Captain to supper, and Anthy and I were walking afterward in the little garden behind the house, it came to the surface. There was an old garden seat at the end of the path, with clambering rose vines, now in full leaf, but not in blossom, upon it. It was a charming spot, with an ancient apple tree not far away, and all around it a garden of old-fashioned flowers. We sat down on the seat.

"David," she said, evidently with some effort, "I'm puzzled about Norton Carr. What has come over him? He's so different."

"I'm puzzled, too," I said, "but probably not so much as you are. I think I know the real cause of the trouble."

Anthy looked around at me, but I did not turn my head. The evening shadows were falling. I felt again that I was in the presence of high events.

"He seems so preoccupied," she continued finally.

"Yes, I've wondered what book it is he is reading so industriously."

"Oh, I saw that," she said.

"What was it?" I asked eagerly.

"Nicolay and Hay's 'Life of Abraham Lincoln.'"

It struck me all in a heap, and I laughed aloud—and yet I heard of Nort's reading not without a thrill.

"What *is* the matter?" asked Anthy. "What does it all mean?"

I had very much the feeling at that moment that I had when I took Anthy's letters from my desk to show to Nort, as though I was about to share a great and precious treasure with Anthy.

So I told her, very quietly, about Nort's visit to me and some of the things he said. She sat very still, her hands lying in her lap, her eyes on some shadowy spot far across the garden. I paused, wondering how much I dared tell.

"I don't know, Anthy, that I was doing right," I said, "but I wanted him to know something of you as you really are. So I told him about your letters to Lincoln, and showed him one of them."

She flushed deeply.

"You *couldn't*, David!"

"Yes, I did—and that may explain why he's reading the life of Lincoln. Maybe he's trying to imitate Lincoln."

"Imitate Lincoln——"

The sound of her voice as she said these words I think will never go quite out of my memory: it was so soft and deep, so tremulous.

And then something happened that I cannot fully explain, nor think of without a thrill. Anthy turned quickly toward me, looked at me through shiny tears, and put her head quickly and impulsively down upon my shoulder.

"Oh, David," she said, "I love you!"

But I knew well what she meant. It was that great moment in a woman's life when in loving the loved one she loves all the world. She was not thinking that moment of me, dear though I might have been to her as a friend, but of Nort—of Nort.

It was only a moment, and then she leaned quickly back, looking at me with starry eyes and a curious trembling lift of the lips.

"But David," she said, "I don't *want* him like Lincoln."

The thought must have raised in her mind some vision of the sober-sided Nort of the last few weeks, for she began to laugh again. I cannot describe it, for it was a laughter so compounded of tenderness, joy, sympathy,

amusement, that it fairly set one's heart to vibrating. There was no part of Anthy—sweet, strong, loving—that was not in that laugh.

"I don't *want* him like Lincoln," she said.

"What do you want him like?" I asked.

"Why exactly like himself, like Nort."

"But I thought you rather distrusted his flightiness."

She was hugging herself with her arms, and rocking a little back and forth. An odd wrinkle came in her forehead.

"David, I did—I do—but somehow I like it—I love it."

She paused.

"It seems to me I like *everything* about Nort."

Do you realize that such beautiful things as these are going on all around us, in an evil and trouble-ridden old world? That in nearly all lives there are such perfect moments? Only we don't remember them. We grow old and wrinkled and sick; we bicker with those we love; it grows harder to remember, easier to forget.

I was going to say that this was the end of the story of the *Star* of Hempfield, but I know

better, of course. It was only the beginning.

"Nort, my boy, I knew it, I knew it!" said the old Captain, when Anthy and Nort told him, though as a matter of fact he had never dreamed of such a thing until two minutes before.

Fergus saw Nort and Anthy come in together, and knew without being told. He sat firmly on his stool until they went out again, so absorbed in their own happiness that they never noticed him at all, and then he climbed down and took off his apron deliberately. He felt about absently for his friendly pipe, put it slowly in his mouth, but did not light it. He stuck his small battered volume of Robert Burns's poems in his pocket—and going out of the back door struck out for the hills. The next morning he was back on his stool again just as usual. It would have been impossible to print the *Star* of Hempfield without Fergus MacGregor.

On a June day I finish this narrative and lay down my pen.

An hour ago I walked along the lane to the top of my pasture to take a look at the distant

town. In the meadows the red clover is in full blossom, the bobolinks are hovering and singing over the low spots, and the cattle are

Fergus stuck his small battered volume of Robert Burns's poems in his pocket—and going out of the back door struck out for the hills

feeding contentedly in all the pastures. I have never seen the wild raspberry bushes setting such a wealth of fruit, nor the blackberries so full of bloom. The grass is nearly ripe for the cutting.

At the top of the hill I stood for a long time looking off across the still countryside toward the town. . . . It is here, after all, that I belong!

I come to the end of the narrative of the *Star* of Hempfield with an indescribable sadness of regret. So much I proposed myself when I set out to write the story of my friends; and so very little have I accomplished! I can see now that I have not taken all of Hempfield—no, not the half of it—nor even all of my friends; but perhaps I have taken all that I could, all that was mine. . . .

As I came down the hill my mind went out warmly toward the printing-office of the *Star* of Hempfield, and I thought of the pleasant old garden in front of it, of the curious bird house, built like a miniature Parthenon at the gable end, where the wrens were now rearing their broods, I thought of Dick, the canary, and of Tom, the cat, sleeping comfortably, as I so often saw him, in a patch of sun-

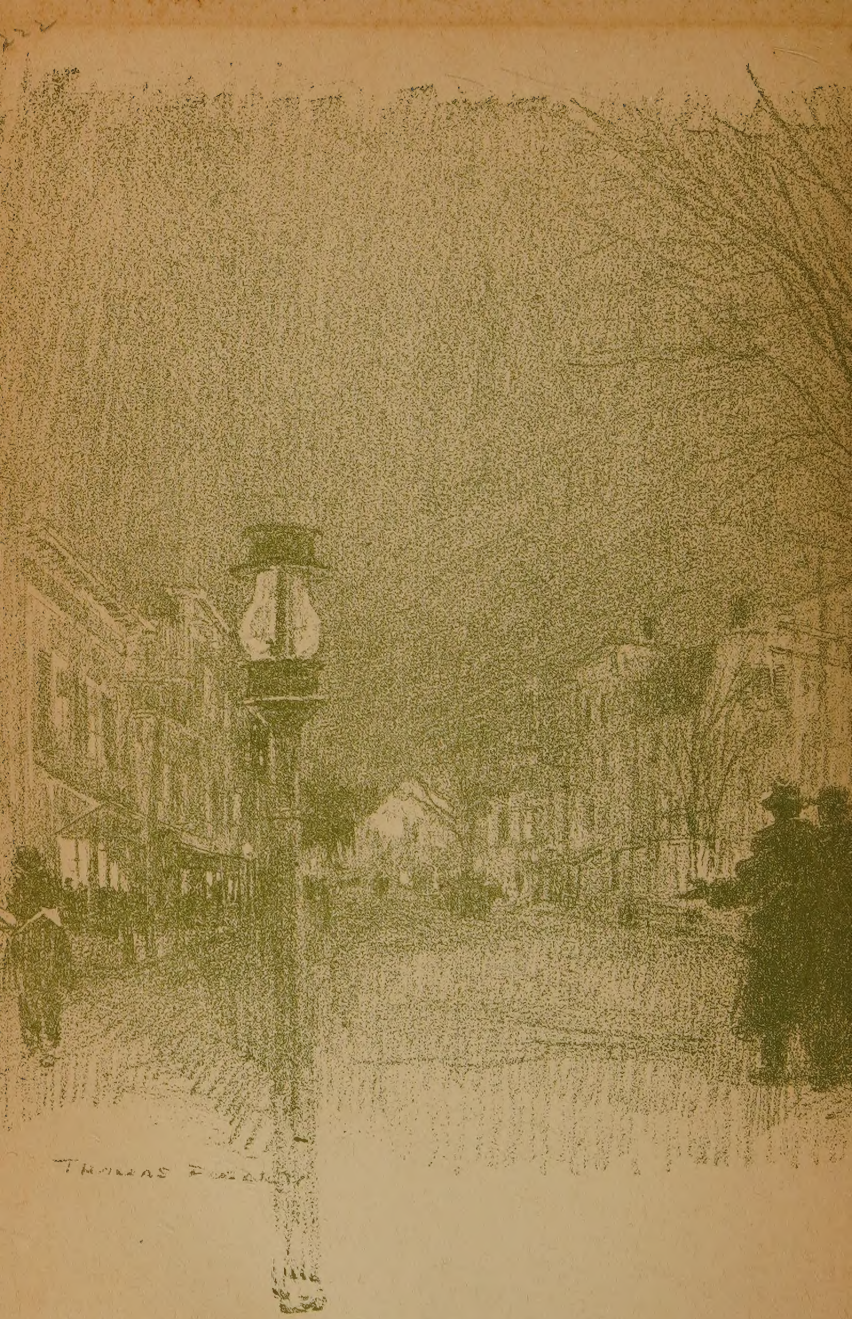
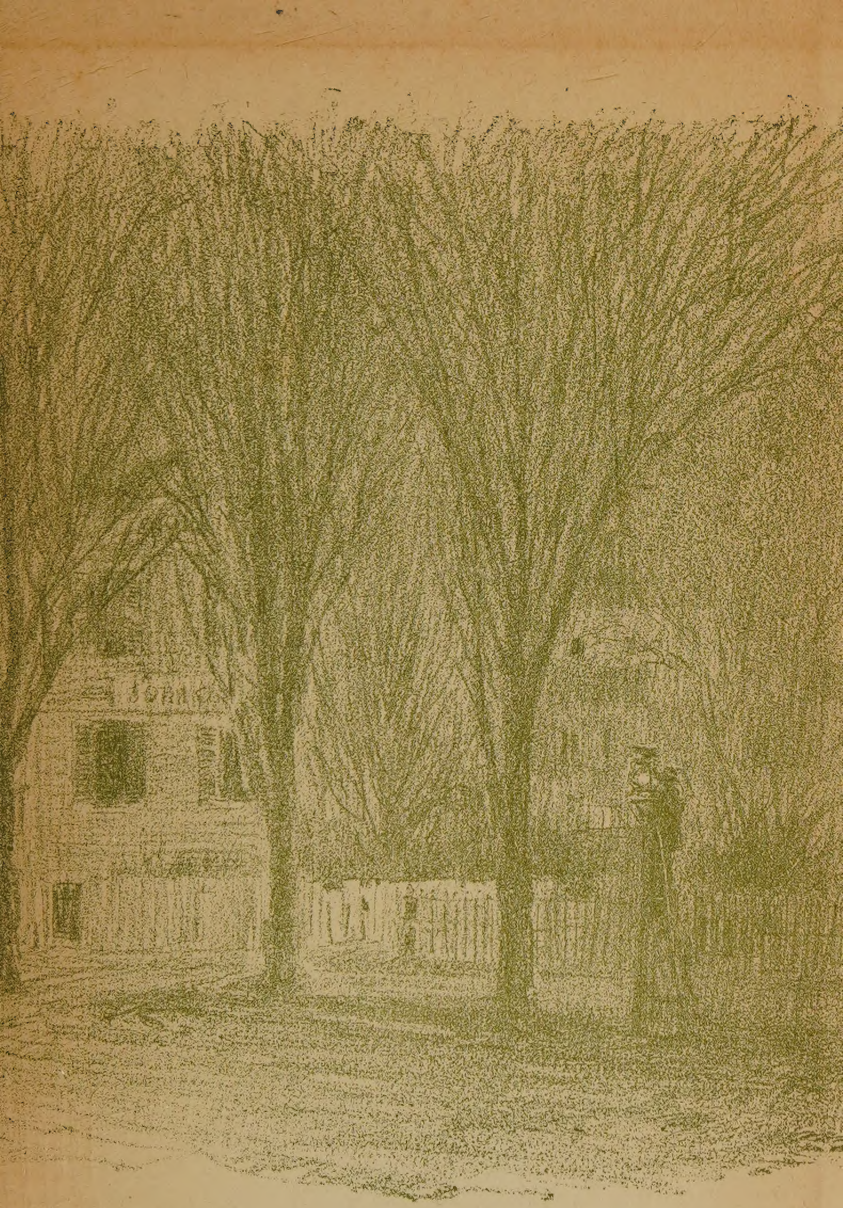
light on the floor—and then, like a great wave of friendly warmth, came the full realization of my friends there in the office of the *Star* of Hempfield, so that I seemed to see them living before my eyes. I thought of how we had worked together for so many months, how we had enjoyed one another, had been thrust apart and drawn together again, had changed, indelibly, one another's inmost lives, and so played our little parts for a brief time upon the stage of life in a country town.

As I came down the hill, reflecting upon all these things, I found myself repeating aloud the words of Miranda:

> "Oh wonder!
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
> That has such people in't."

And so my narrative must close. Friendly town of Hempfield! Even if I write no more about you I shall still feel your presence just beyond the hills. On calm mornings from the top of my pasture I shall see the smoke of your friendly fires, and when the wind favours on sunny Sabbath mornings I shall hear the

distant and drowsy sweet sound of your bells. And Anthy and Nort, Fergus MacGregor, and Captain Doane, and Ed Smith—how I have enjoyed you all and all I have known of you! As I look back to the time before I knew you the world seems small and cold, and even the hills and the fields and the town somehow less admirable. I shall not easily let you go out of my life! And twinkling *Star* of Hempfield—may you long continue to illuminate this small corner of the world!

THE END

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